# The State of Bangladesh's Political Governance, Development, and Society: According to its Citizens

## A Survey of the Bangladeshi People

2019 Edition

The Asia Foundation

BRAC INSTITUTE OF GOVERNANCE & DEVELOPMENT

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Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

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## 2019 Edition


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# INTRODUCTION

This survey report entitled **"The State of Bangladesh's Political Governance, Development, and Society: According to Its Citizens"** is part of a national-level citizen perception survey conducted every year by The Asia Foundation. The Foundation is happy to collaborate for this survey with the Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD). **The field-level data was collected during the period between February and March 2020.** As the title of the report indicates, the scope of the survey is quite extensive. Principal themes include citizens' perception of Bangladesh's society, politics, and economy; perception of political governance and representation; citizenship; democracy; inclusive development; digitalized Bangladesh; social media's role in influencing policy-making; and social cohesion, trust, and Rohingya issues.

Significant changes have been made in this edition in terms of the scope of investigations from the previous editions. New themes that have been introduced in this edition of the survey include citizenship, deliberative democracy, and the idea of inclusive development. In light of the recent events, modifications of past themes include the use of social media in policy influence, voting preference by gender including third genders, dominant party system, and its socio-political and economic impacts. Appropriate comparisons of survey findings have been made among different editions (2017 and 2018) to provide a dynamic understanding of the studied themes.

We are grateful to the Australian High Commission in Bangladesh for their support for this survey. We would like to extend special thanks to Dr. Mirza M. Hassan and Syeda Salina Aziz of the Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) in refining the questionnaire and as the main author of the report and MD. Zakaria for his day-to-day and technical support for this effort.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the respondents across the country who willingly took the time to answer our questions on critical issues, and collectively contributed to a richer understanding of the perspectives of the Bangladeshi people.

Kazi Faisal Bin Seraj
Country Representative
Bangladesh

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a national survey conducted among 4,096 households in 32 districts from 8 divisions of Bangladesh to gather citizens' opinions on issues pertinent to political governance, development, and society. The key findings are organized under seven separate sections.

## Dynamics of citizens' perception of Bangladesh's society, politics, and economy

The survey started by asking the respondents about the path the country is following whether they feel that Bangladesh is heading in the right or wrong direction with respect to social, political, and development/economic domains. In all three domains, the majority of the respondents said that Bangladesh is heading in the right direction. The share of people who thought that Bangladesh is heading in the wrong direction did so largely in terms of the political domain (about 31%). Meanwhile, about 64% of the respondents in the same domain believed that Bangladesh is heading in the right direction.

Considering the social domain, about 77% of the respondents said that Bangladesh is going in the right direction and approximately 22% disagreed. The majority (about 70%) of the respondents thought that Bangladesh is going in the right direction in respect to the country's economic aspects, while 28% thought otherwise. In all three domains, respondents from the urban area were found to be more positive about the direction Bangladesh is heading.

Meanwhile, respondents with higher education were less likely to think that Bangladesh, in all three domains, is going in the right direction.

Most of the respondents believed that Bangladesh is heading in the right direction as a result of economic improvements the country has achieved. About 63% of the respondents said that the infrastructure has improved, followed by improvement in the economy as noted by 57%, overall development by 47%, and improvement in education by 30% of the respondents. About 41% pointed out better security, and law and order as the two other major reasons. As seen, the lowest responses were recorded in politics and governance categories. Altogether only about 23% of the respondents believed that political governance and stability have improved.

Those who thought that Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction also cited economic reasons as the primary inducement behind their opinion. About 69% of the respondents viewed economic/infrastructure-related reasons as the primary factors behind their opinions. Among this particular group, 56% of the respondents identified the poor performance of the economy as a major reason. Another cluster of reasons relates to political/economic governance issues, such as increasing corruption (42%), political

instability (32%), and over-dominance of one party (34%). Deteriorating law and order conditions were also mentioned by 35% of the respondents, followed by 27% respondents who cited the decline of freedom of opinion and human rights violation as reasons behind the country's heading in the wrong direction.

Respondents from the highest income group considered poor performance of the economy as a primary reason for Bangladesh's heading in the wrong direction (70%) followed by the dominance of one party (52%). On the contrary, the lowest income group perceived increasing corruption (52%) and poor performance of the economy (43%) as the major reasons behind this.

Respondents were asked to state the biggest and the second-biggest problem in Bangladesh. The largest proportion (33%) of the respondents identified a price increase of essential goods as the biggest problem followed by unemployment and corruption. About 1% of the respondents stated that there is no problem in Bangladesh. Interestingly, issues which are often reported as major problems in the public domain like violence against women, quality of healthcare services, and road safety, less than 2% of the respondents reportedly recognized them as problems.

## Citizens' perception of politics and elected leaders

The survey explored if citizens are aware of the parliamentarians who represent their areas in the national parliament. About 82% of them could name their Members of Parliament (MPs) correctly. Comparing this data with the previous The Foundation surveys (2017 and 2018), not much deviance can be noted, since 86% and 81% of the respondents, in 2017 and 2018, respectively, could identify their MPs.

The survey also inquired whether the respondents knew if the MPs visited their areas in the last one or two year(s), to which 64% replied in the affirmative.

The survey aimed to explore citizens' perception of both what MPs currently do and what they should do. Generally, it seemed that they see their MPs as people who work for their localities rather than representing them in the parliament. About 88% of the citizens think MPs work for local development and 81% think that they solve problems for local people. Responses about what MPs should do are also aligned—about 90% of the respondents believe that MPs should work for local development and 88% would like to see MPs solving problems for the local people.

MPs taking part in discussions on national issues, national law-making, and raising local problems in parliament receive more support from higher income and education categories of respondents compared to the lower ones. The support for local development and helping out local people received overwhelming support from all categories of respondents irrespective of their income.

The survey asked whether respondents perceive the MPs as people who care about ordinary citizens. A total of 63% of the respondents felt MPs care about the general citizens, whereas 35% of them felt the opposite. Across the education groups, not much variance was noticed; however, the highly educated group seemed to agree more with the statement that MPs care about the ordinary people compared to the lowest education category. The difference in responses across income groups is not very pronounced.

Respondents were found to be more aware of their local representatives. Around 87% of the respondents could name the municipality mayor, and in the case of Union Parishad (UP) chairperson, it was 95%. Seeking help from UP chairperson is more common than seeking help from the municipality mayor. Interestingly, people tend to seek help more on personal matters than they do for local problems. An overwhelming majority of them are satisfied with the work of their local representatives—about 79% of the rural population are satisfied followed by 74% in urban.

While voting in elections, it seems that most of the respondents (60%) consider the personal traits of candidates as the most important factor. Followed by this support of personal traits, networking and accessibility and availability of the candidate received support from 38% of the respondents. Surprisingly, political identity and career of the candidate received a mere 2% support. Within personal trait cluster, personal character got the highest response—about 25%, followed by education (16%) and then past track record which was 6%. In the previous year, personal character was also the most chosen option—about 33% of the respondents chose it in 2018. As seen, the network of the candidate, i.e. how accessible and available he/she is to the respondents/voters, also played a major role for electability. Around 20% viewed their personal connection with the candidate as an important factor for choosing candidate, followed by 18% viewing the availability and accessibility as the most important attributes.

Some percentage increases in the respondents' preference for a candidate's education can be observed over the past year, from 15% in 2018 to 20% in 2019. Among the ones who chose education to be the first attribute, were mostly people with higher education (30%). It is also noticeable that people with no education (about 26%) valued personal connection with the candidate almost three times more than highly educated ones (about 9%).

The survey aimed to identify what were the most important attributes that make a party electable. Findings showed that about 39% of the citizens put programmatic accomplishment of the political party as the most important attribute in electing their government. Another 23% considered the party programmatic proposals, followed by 19% of the respondents to whom party history came first. It appears that integrity and internal democratic practice of a party were less important compared to the party programs (proposed) and programmatic accomplishments. Only 0.4% wanted their leaders to be

honest, 0.1% wanted a corruption-free party, followed by another mere 0.01% who demanded internal democracy in the party. Note that the religious identity of the party also matters very little to the citizens (2.7%).

How much importance citizens give to the party identity of a candidate in terms of his/her electability? In this regard when the survey asked how likely the respondents were to vote for a candidate of their preference if he/she changed the political party, an approximately 76% of the population said that they were unlikely (very and somewhat) to vote for that person. Only a total of 24% of the respondents answered that they would still vote for that person, even if he/she changes party affiliation. With the education level increasing, respondents shifted more towards choosing the candidate of their choice regardless of the party identity.

The survey respondents were asked how much political identities affect the access to different services. About 71% of the citizens thought that affiliating with the right party can have large or some influence on accessing justice in contrast to about 27% who said political identity had no influence on accessing justice. In accessing public services, around 68% of the people thought political identity can have large or some influence and 30% felt otherwise. Respondents had quite a mix of opinion when it came to the influence of political identity in conducting business. About 45% of the citizens thought political identity had little to no influence in conducting business, whereas 51% of the people felt this particular identity left a considerable influence on doing business. About 67% of the population felt that political identity helped one in accessing administration, whereas 31% disagreed with the notion.

The survey asked the respondents if they think political parties care about general people. Although people were rigid about their party affiliation, a total of 56% of the respondents disagreed and felt that they were not cared for. Around 43% of the people agreed with the notion that political parties care about them. The percentage of people disagreeing with the statement was higher among urban population compared to the rural.

The respondents were also asked about the major causes of political violence in Bangladesh. The majority of the respondents, i.e. about 75%, viewed political reasons as the major causes of political violence. Political conflicts between parties and party factions were reported by as many as 62% of the respondents. Violence caused due to one-sided control over politics was reported by 8%. The percentage reporting hartal as a cause was minimum due to the fact that hartal incidents have declined significantly since 2014. Among the other reasons, about mastani (thuggery), forceful occupation of the property by party leaders, and extortion were mentioned.

## Citizenship

The survey respondents were asked what three major things they would need as citizens to live with dignity.

The responses came overwhelmingly in line with the socio-economic needs of the citizens. About 51% of the respondents perceived money as the major factor which ensures a dignified life. Then came food with 47% of the respondents opting for it. Housing was the third major thing chosen by about 47% of the respondents. Most of the respondents opting for housing came from the lowest income groups. On the other hand, citizens' preference for democracy, rights, and rule of law seemed to be at the lower end of choices. However, income-wise disaggregation showed that the percentages for these three factors went up along with the rise in income. About 20% of the respondents in the higher income group opted for human rights, followed by 13% for democracy and another 13% for rule of law.

Responses disaggregated by education also showed some pattern. Money, food, and housing as major three factors were chosen by people who have no education. Education, security, health, and employment were chosen mostly by the highly educated respondents.

The survey also asked in order to live with freedom, what were the major things the citizens need?

About 67% of the respondents chose freedom of movement as the most important factor in order to ensure freedom. Public safety was supported by about 58% of the respondents.

The next major preference was freedom of expression. About 52% of the respondents chose freedom of expression as essential. Furthermore, to 13% of the people, a free life meant one in which people can practice their religion freely and to 11%, it was a life with the freedom to participate in politics. In both of these cases, people with higher education were the majority group to choose these as the defining qualities of freedom.

The survey wanted to know what citizens understand by the "government of the people." From the responses received, it appeared that most perceived people's government as a benevolent one—which cares, honors, and listens to them. About 67% of the respondents said that a "government of the people" is the one that cares, with the majority responses coming from the lowest income group. Another 48% saw "government who listens to ordinary people" as the government of the people. And about 25% said that people's government was the one that provided assistance during personal distress. The government that honors people was also supported by 20% of the respondents as the definition of the "government of the people."

It is interesting to note that democracy-related factors did not receive many responses. A "government controlled by democracy" was preferred by only 19% of the respondents. Similarly, "government which promotes political freedom" and "government elected through a democratic system" only received about 6% and 3% support, respectively.

Based on other expository criteria, approximately 15% of the citizens defined "government of the people" as a "government which ensures economic prosperity" and 7% preferred a "government which ensures political stability." Justice as the criterion of "government of the people" received 21% responses.

The survey also aimed to find out how citizens perceived their relationship with their government. About 31% of the citizens responded that they considered the government as their representative. Almost 26% of respondents perceived the government as their patron. Another 27% deemed it as their protector and service provider. And 8% of the citizens saw their relationship with the government as the one between a king and his subjects.

## Democracy in Bangladesh

The survey wanted to find out how citizens understood the concept of democracy. Democracy as "freedom" and "rule by people" received the highest responses—34% and 33%, respectively. Perception of democracy as "a right to hold free and fair elections" has decreased this year considerably compared to the last year's survey; although responses relating to the perception of democracy as a mean to ensure country's development has increased. Quite strikingly, one-fourth of the respondents failed to articulate their understanding of democracy, which was high among rural and female respondents.

When asked if people voted or decided to vote in elections, both national and local, the survey reported that the overwhelming majority either voted or are planning to vote in an election (more than 95%). Generally, election participation and decision regarding voting slightly decreased with income and education.

An overwhelming majority of 75% strongly felt that at present one party played a dominant role in politics/governance of Bangladesh, while another 11% mostly felt the same way. But intriguingly, only one-third of the respondents felt that the impact of a dominant party system in politics, governance, society, and economic transactions would be mostly or fully negative. People in urban and educated groups were more concerned with such negative impacts. Highest concerns were noted with regard to politics and economic transactions.

Discussing politics with friends was not very common among survey respondents. About 80% almost never or occasionally discussed politics with a friend, while the other 20% discussed politics often or regularly. The percentage was as low as 10% among female

respondents. At the same time, majority of the respondents (57%) felt that people in their area were not at all or not much free to express their opinion regarding political matters. Even among the educated people, three-fourth of the respondents almost never or occasionally discussed politics. Moreover, 67% of the same group also believed that people were somewhat not free or not at all free to discuss politics.

The awareness about local government forums was not very common among the rural respondents. Only a little more than one-third of the respondents knew about Ward Sabha and a mere 16% knew about open budget meetings (OBMs). However, the majority of those who knew about the forums were correct about the meeting places of both forums. People with higher income displayed more knowledge in this matter than others.

Information about the social safety net was known to almost all the respondents. Half of the respondents perceived that the programs were not at all sufficient or mostly insufficient to cater their need while 52% were of the view that safety net benefits (allowances, cash, food, etc.) were not distributed very fairly or at all fairly. Interestingly, the higher income group viewed that the social safety net benefits were distributed fairly compared to the lower income group.

More than two-thirds of the respondents knew about village courts, and the majority (79%) of them had the correct information on where it takes place. The responses increased with education and income even though the difference was not very high. People perceived the village court to be fairer than the shalish.

The strongest support for women leadership was received in the form of their presence in the parliament followed by in government offices and in the political parties. Women as local government leaders were also generally accepted by more than half of the respondents. On the contrary, support for female leadership was lowest in the areas of the trade and other unions, profession and religion-based organizations, and private sectors. As expected, women were more supportive of female leadership in all the respective institutions compared to their male counterpart.

In a national election, however, majority of the respondents (54%) would prefer to vote for a male candidate. Only 22% said that they would vote for a female. Roughly 7% would vote for either male or female but not for the third gender. Around 17% of the respondents said they were not concerned about gender identity while voting. The percentage of female respondents preferring to vote for males were also slightly higher than those who would prefer to vote for females. Females and highly educated respondents were more likely to care less about gender identity.

Parliament was viewed as an institution of high integrity by 70% of the respondents.

Compared to that, people perceived political parties, election, and judiciary to have low integrity. High integrity of the Bangladesh Army and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) was perceived but the integrity of police was assumed to be very low.

Higher educated group's perception of the lack of integrity for each institution was higher than that of the people with low education and vice versa. Same holds true for people of higher and lower income groups.

## Digitalized Bangladesh, social media, and policy influence

In the last few years, Bangladesh has seen massive increases in the use of mobile phones and the internet. This trend was broadly reflected in this survey. The findings suggest that about 89% of the respondents had their own mobile phones. The percentage was higher (94%) among males compared to females (85%). Respondents with higher education were more likely to own a mobile phone.

About 35% of the respondents were found to have access to the internet. The respondents from urban areas were more likely to have access to the internet than those living in rural areas. The access also improved with education.

Respondents who had access to the internet were asked about the platforms they use to communicate with others. Majority of the respondents said that they use IMO (86%) followed by Facebook (71%). The popularity of instant messaging was also quite high among the respondents. Interestingly, all the platforms except IMO were more popular among males. It is also popular across all education categories, even though the highest education group uses Facebook more than IMO. It should also be noted that except for IMO and YouTube, the use of all other platforms went up with education.

About 74% of the respondents who used Facebook reported that they used these platforms to get national news. About 60% stated that they used these platforms to share their ideas and concerns with their friends and community members.

Irrespective of education categories, Facebook remained the most popular platform to get national news, and the percentage of using Facebook for national news increased with education. Women were somewhat less likely to use these platforms to get national news compared to their male counterparts. Approximately 17% of the respondents used Facebook to get information on political issues.

When asked if citizens can ensure responsiveness of the state through Facebook, the majority (51%) of the respondents opined that Facebook cannot be used to ensure responsiveness of the state (combining not very often and never). Less than one-third of the respondents (27.5%) believed that citizens can ensure responsiveness (combining almost all the time or often) through Facebook. Difference by location was not very

pronounced; however, males were slightly more likely to view that Facebook can be used to make the state responsive, while one-quarter of the female chose the response category "do not know." The positive responses regarding the use of Facebook to make the state responsive also increased with education.

Most of the respondents did not think that it was safe to post their opinions regarding the political governance of the country on Facebook. About 76% of the respondents viewed that it was never or almost never safe to post political opinions on Facebook. Only about 8% of the respondents thought that it was generally safe. Concerns regarding posting political opinions on Facebook increased with education. About 73% of the respondents belonging to the highest education group thought that it was never safe to post their opinions regarding political governance. Compared to the rural area, a higher percentage of urban respondents believed that it was safer not to post their opinion on this matter.

Compared to the political governance, relatively more respondents thought that it was safer to post opinions about social issues of the country (about 21%). Nevertheless, 64% of the respondents still believed that it was never or almost never safe to post opinions about social issues of the country.

## Inclusive development

The survey also explored what respondents understand by development. It appeared that respondents deemed the development of infrastructures like roads and bridges as the most important feature of development (33%), followed by the development of education (19%), generation of electricity (16%), and poverty reduction (15%). Development of the healthcare system (7%) and prevention of unemployment (7%) were considered as features of development as well. Interestingly, only a very few respondents (less than 1%) considered agricultural and industrial development as features of development.

The survey also explored if the current development process can be perceived as equally beneficial for different groups of respondents. More than half (about 55%) of the respondents perceived the current development process as absolutely equally beneficial for both men and women. Meanwhile, 18% felt that it was roughly equal and 13% felt there was a little equality. About 12% of the respondents felt there was no equality at all. Interestingly, women also felt in a similar way. When asked if the current development process was equally beneficial for all income classes, their responses varied. About 28% said it was absolutely beneficial, whereas 35% said it was not at all equally beneficial for all income classes. Intriguingly, the respondents belonging to the lowest income category answered more towards the development process as being absolutely equal (38%) than they did for the process being not at all equal (33%).

When the respondents were asked if the current development process was equally beneficial for all religious groups, about 45% of the respondents believed the process to be absolutely equally beneficial for respondents of all religions. About 17% felt it was roughly equal, and according to 16%, there was little equality, while 19% felt it was not equally beneficial at all. While asked how equally beneficial the development process was for respondents of all ethnic groups, 39% of the respondents found it absolutely equal, 15% believed it to be roughly equal, 18% found little equality, and for 20%, the process is not equal at all.

## Social cohesion, trust, and Rohingya issues

On the topic of trust, respondents did not seem very inclined to easily trust people. Almost 76% of the respondents said that they should be very careful in dealing with people and around 19% said that most people cannot be trusted. Only about 4% said that most people can be trusted. Non educated respondents seemed to answer more for both "most people cannot be trusted" and "most people can be trusted" categories. On the other hand, respondents with higher education answered more for being careful in dealing with people (84%). About 80% of them found their neighbors absolutely or somewhat trustworthy. Respondents had lower trust in the leaders than they had in their neighbors. About 27% found the leaders very trustworthy, 32% found them trustworthy, 28% had little trust in them, and 14% had no trust at all. The responses were similar when asked to rate their trust in community groups.

Perception regarding collective action was explored through a scenario question on voluntary engagement in monitoring local construction work. More than 90% of the respondents commended this as a good initiative but 6% thought that such groups could have no impact. Around 77% of the respondents said that they would be eager to help while 20% said that it would be difficult to manage time for this.

Respondents were asked how they felt about Rohingya refugees living in their community. The negative outlook was very visible with about 86% of the respondents saying that they will not welcome Rohingya refugees to live in their community. About 15% of the respondents said that they would welcome the refugees. When compared to the responses received from 2018 survey, it could be seen that the percentage of affirmative responses decreased considerably. The respondents with the lowest income were more affirmative in their answers than the respondents in other income groups. Almost 60% of the respondents thought that the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) is doing enough for the Rohingya community, followed by 34% thinking that the government is doing a lot. Only 3% felt that the government was not doing enough and 4% said that they did not know. As for the international community's work regarding the Rohingya crisis, 56% answered that it is doing enough and 17% answered that it is doing a lot. More respondents thought that compared to GoB (3%), the international community was not doing enough (10%).

A good number of respondents also felt that they did not know about the role or work of the international community (16%).

The survey also asked for how long Rohingya refugees should be allowed to stay in Bangladesh. Almost 70% of the respondents believed that they should leave immediately. Again, comparison with 2018 reflects that respondents have grown less welcoming towards Rohingya refugees since 2018. A similar observation could be seen in the current survey, as respondents answering that the refugees should leave now increased from 40% to 69% and answering that they should stay until it is safe to return decreased from 45% to 20%. The last question on Rohingya refugees sought to understand the perception regarding immediate effects (on the country) of Rohingya's coming to Bangladesh. Almost 90% thought that the effects were negative with only 7% finding positive effects.

# 1. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The total sample of the survey was 4,096. In order to be nationally representative, the survey samples followed the national urban-rural (25% vs. 75%) and male-female (50% each) disaggregation. Table 1.1 shows the sampling distribution by gender and location.

| | Male | Female | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural | 1,538 | 1,534 | 3,072 |
| Urban | 512 | 512 | 1,024 |
| Overall | 2,050 | 2,046 | 4,096 |

Table 1.1: Sampling distribution by gender and location

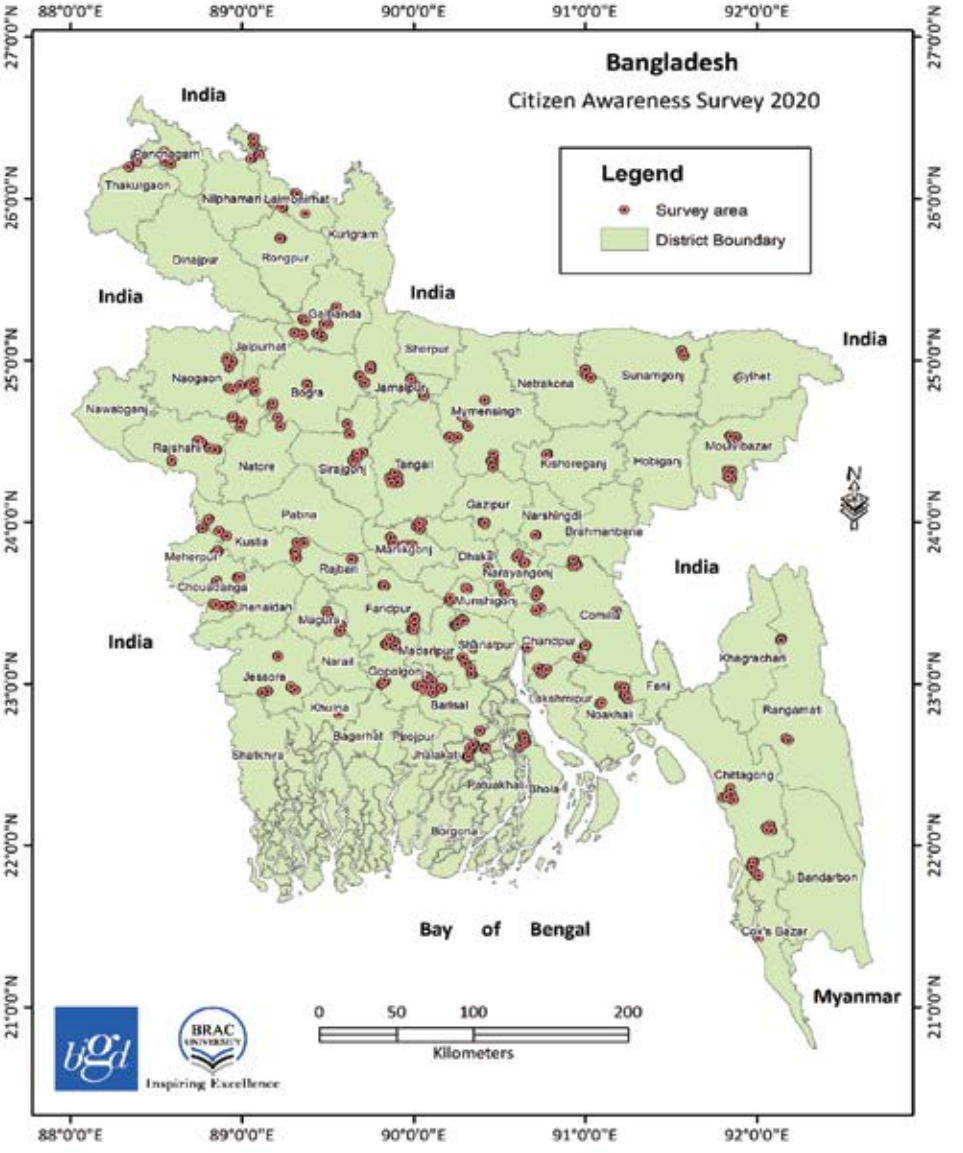
The sample was divided among the eight administrative divisions of Bangladesh based on the proportion of the population in each division. Table 1.2 shows the sampling distribution in each division. A multi-stage sampling method was used to do this distribution (Figure 1.1). At the first stage, 32 districts/zilas (50% of the total districts in Bangladesh) were randomly selected. From each district, the urban and rural areas were segregated in order to ensure better geographical representation. The sadar upazila (upazila headquarter) of each district was purposefully selected as an urban location and then from each upazila sadar one ward was randomly picked. From each ward, two mahallas (local neighborhoods) were randomly selected as an urban primary sampling unit (PSU) for this survey. Regarding the rural samples, 48 upazilas were randomly selected from 32 districts. In the next stage, two unions per upazila were randomly selected. From each union, two randomly selected villages served as the rural PSUs. In each village/*mahalla*, a total of 16 respondents were surveyed—half of whom were male and the other half female. In total, the survey included 192 villages as a rural sample and 64 *mahallas* as an urban sample.

The fieldwork was conducted using tablets. The data collection took about a month, starting from February 2020 to March 2020.

Figure 1.1: Sampling design flowchart

| | Number of selected zilas | Number of selected upazilas | Number of selected unions | Number cof selected villages/ mahallas | Number of samples per division |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dhaka** | 8 | 16 | 32 | 64 | 1,024 |
| **Chattogram** | 6 | 12 | 24 | 48 | 768 |
| **Khulna** | 4 | 8 | 16 | 32 | 512 |
| **Rajshahi** | 4 | 8 | 16 | 32 | 512 |
| **Rangpur** | 4 | 8 | 16 | 32 | 512 |
| **Sylhet** | 2 | 4 | 8 | 16 | 256 |
| **Barishal** | 2 | 4 | 8 | 16 | 256 |
| **Mymensingh** | 2 | 4 | 8 | 16 | 256 |
| **Total** | 32 | 64 | 128 | 256 | 4,096 |

Table 1.2: Distribution of village/mahalla




Map 1.1: Distribution of respondents in Bangladesh

## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILES

The survey, as mentioned earlier, was conducted among 2,048 equal number of males and females. Figure 2.1 shows a summary of the profile of the respondents.

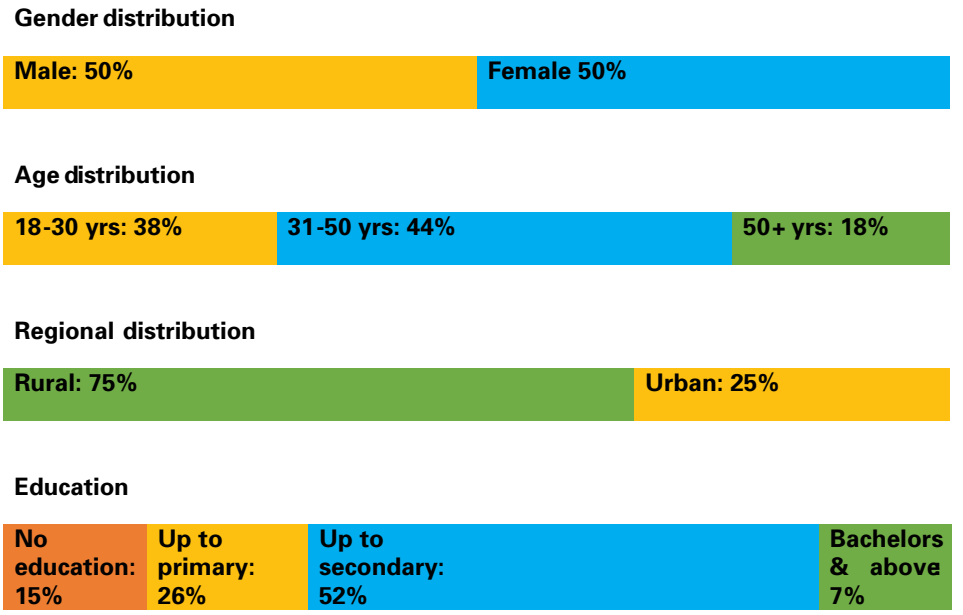



Figure 2.1: Snapshot of profiles

Age distribution of survey respondents by gender is presented in Figure 2.2. As seen, the single largest group of respondents (about 44%) was aged between 31 and 50 years. Followed by this, 38% of the respondents fell into the age group of 18-30. Only 18% were 50 years or older. Surveyed females were comparatively younger than their male counterpart; the percentages of females in 18-30 and 31-50 age groups are higher than those of the males.

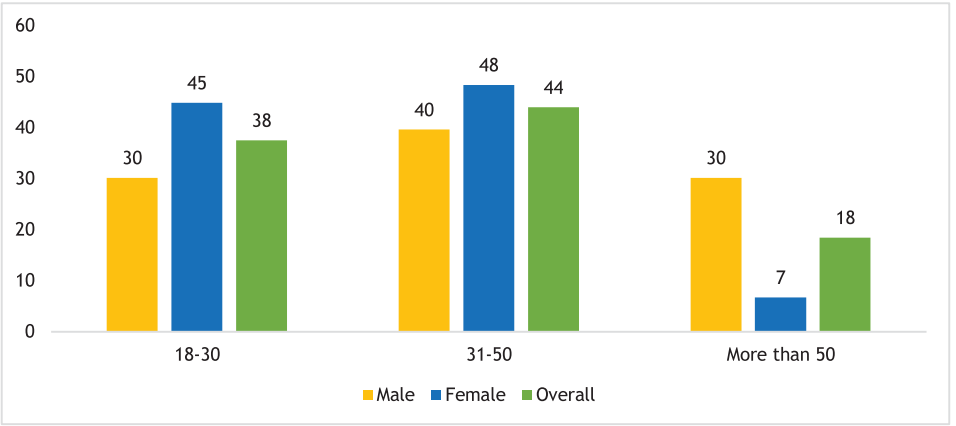



Figure 2.2: Age distribution of respondents

The survey finds that the majority of the respondents (85%) could at least read and write, among which 52% of the respondents had secondary education (class 6 to 12). Only 7% of the respondents had studied bachelors and above. Figure 2.3 shows respondents' educational qualification disaggregated by gender. The educational qualification does not vary much between males and females.

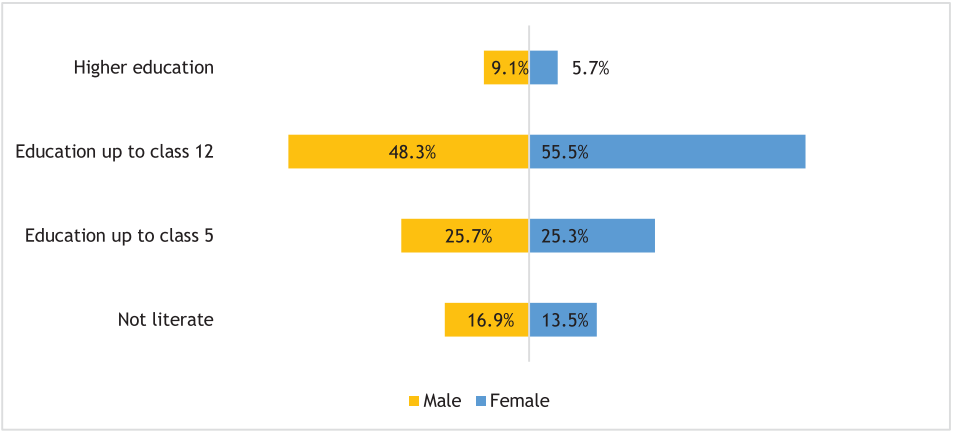



Figure 2.3: Respondents' education

Over 86% of the respondents were Muslims followed by around 11% Hindus. Around 97% of the respondents were Bengali and the rest were Aboriginals or Non-Bengalis.

On average, 42% of the total respondents were homemakers, followed by 12% farmers, 11% businesspersons, 10% service holders, and 8% students. The occupational variations were not very pronounced in rural and urban regions, except that the share of businessmen and service holders were higher in urban regions and the share of farmers was found close to zero (Figure 2.4).

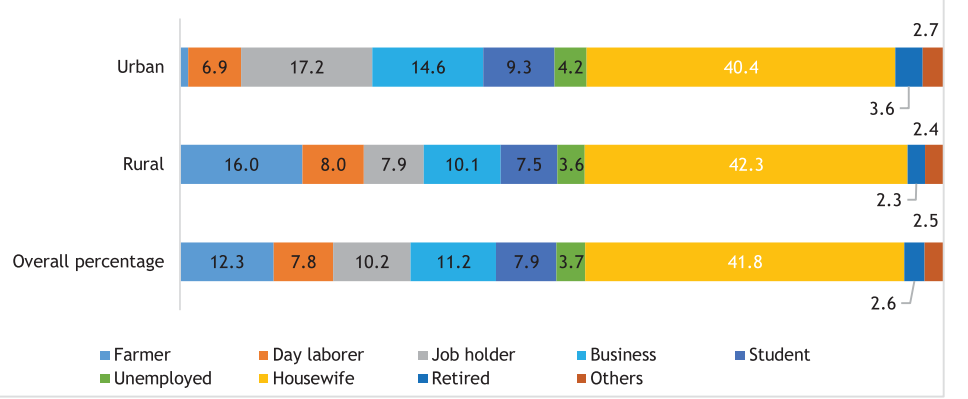



Figure 2.4: Respondents' occupations

The average household consisted of 5 members, and the variation of this size among rural and urban is not significant. (Figure 2.5).

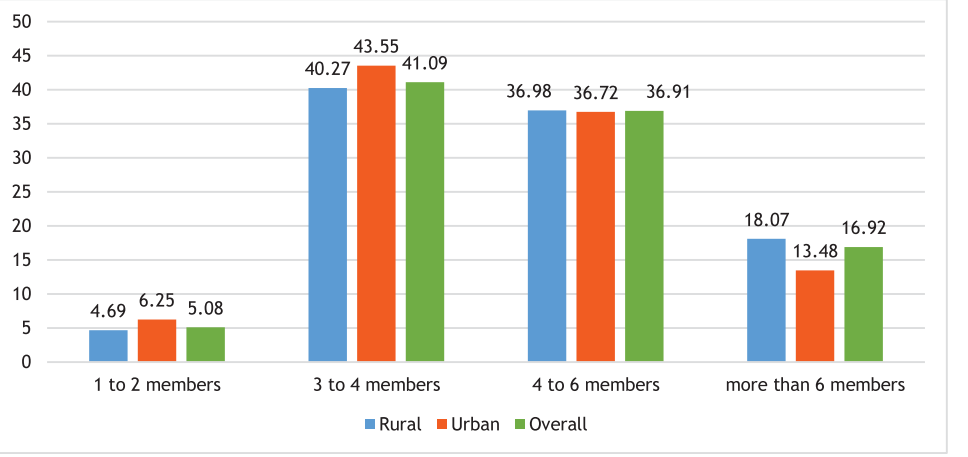



Figure 2.5: Number of members in the household

The survey obtained monthly expenditures of the households and considered these as the representative of monthly income (Figure 2.6). The single largest group (about 46%) of the respondents reported having a monthly household income over BDT 10,000 to 20,000. This group was followed by 34% household who had a monthly income of BDT 5,000-10,000 and about 12% of the households with a monthly income of over BDT 20,000 to 30,000

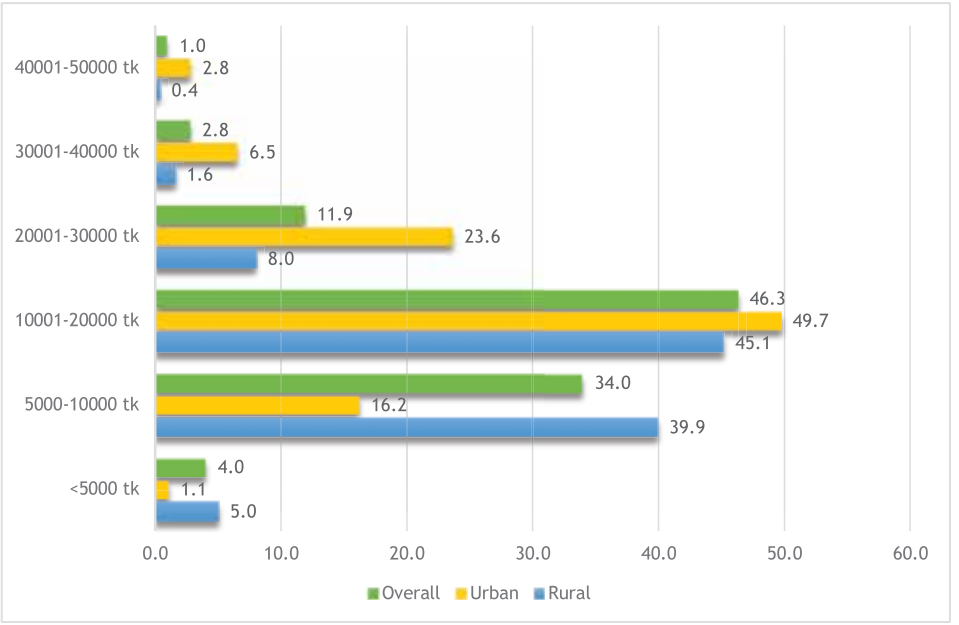



Figure 2.6: Monthly income of households

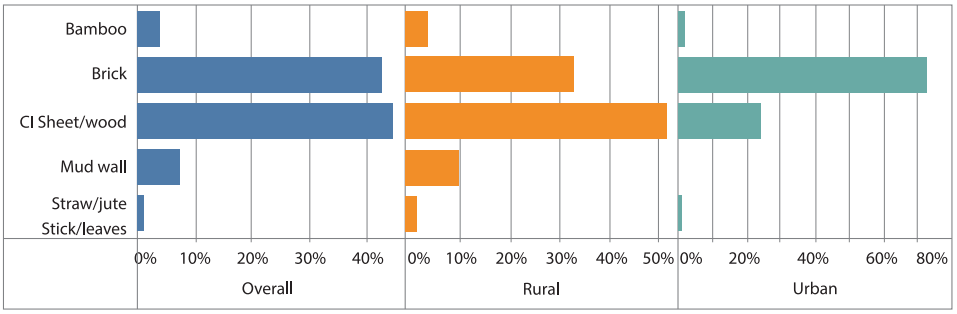



Figure 2.7: Construction material of housing by location

The rural-urban variation was pronounced among the households in terms of income. The share of households with a monthly income lower than BDT 10,000 was high in rural regions than in urban. On the contrary, the share of households having a monthly income of BDT 10,000 or more was much higher in urban. For instance, the percentage of urban households having an income of over BDT 40,000 per month was around 3%, but the share of households with the same income was less than 1% in rural.

Approximately 73% of the urban respondents lived in brick wall houses followed by 24% of the people living in CI sheets/wood houses (Figure 2.7). The majority (51%) of the rural respondents lives in CI sheet/wood-made houses followed by another 33% living in brick wall houses and 10% in mud houses. The survey showed that in both urban and rural areas, the majority uses electricity—about 100% in urban areas and 95% in rural.

# 3. DYNAMICS OF CITIZENS' PERCEPTION OF BA GLDESH'S SOCIETY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMY

## 3.1. Direction of the country

Respondents' were asked whether Bangladesh is heading towards the right or wrong direction with respect to social, political, and development/economic domains. In all three domains, the majority of the respondents said Bangladesh is heading in the right direction (Figure 3.1). The share of people who thought that Bangladesh is heading in the wrong direction is largely noticeable in the political domain—about 31%. On the contrary, about 64% of the respondents believed that Bangladesh is heading in the right direction in this domain.

Considering the social domain, about 77% of the respondents said that Bangladesh is going in the right direction and approximately 22% disagreed. The majority (about 70%) of the respondents thought Bangladesh is going in the right direction in the economic domain while 28% of the respondents thought otherwise.

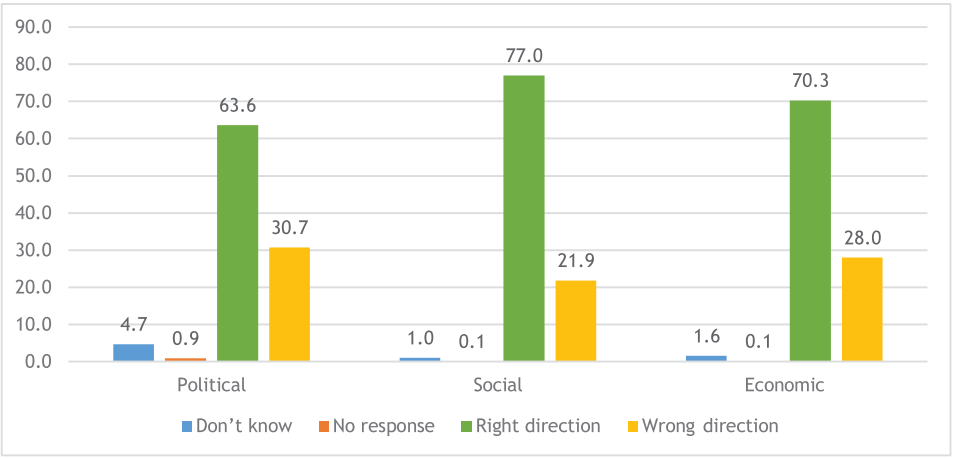



Figure 3.1: Respondents' opinions on whether Bangladesh is going in the right or wrong direction

In all three domains, respondents from the urban areas are found to be more positive about the direction Bangladesh is going (Figure 3.2). Considering the political aspect, approximately 67% of the urban respondents believed that Bangladesh is going in the right direction—a view that is shared by 52% of the rural respondents. In the social domain, about 80% of the urban respondents thought Bangladesh is going in the right direction and about 68% of the rural respondents agreed. With regard to the economic domain heading in the right direction, the percentage of difference between the urban and rural respondents is the highest—74% vs 59%.

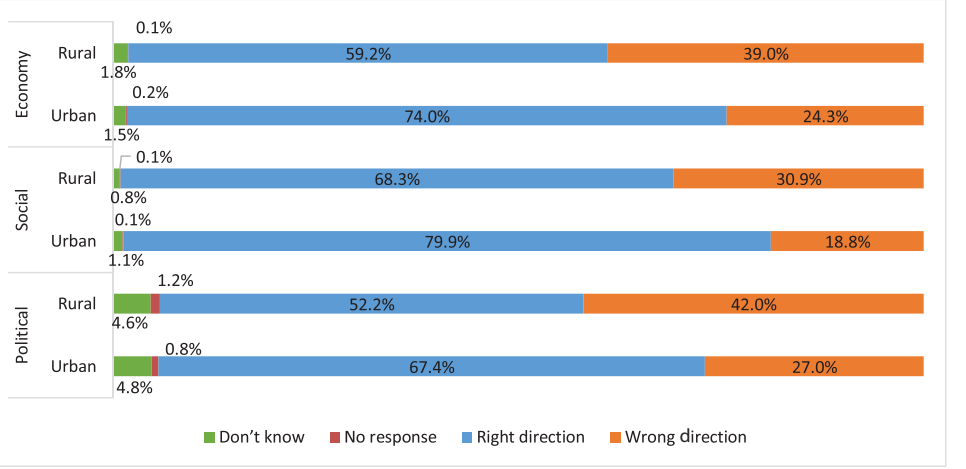



Figure 3.2: Respondents' opinions on whether Bangladesh is going in the right or wrong direction by living area

In all three domains, respondents with more education were less likely to think that Bangladesh is going in the right direction (Figure 3.3). For example, when about 66% of the no education cohort perceived that the country is heading in the right direction in terms of the political domain, about half of the respondents in higher education group believed the same. The trend remains quite similar in the remaining two domains.

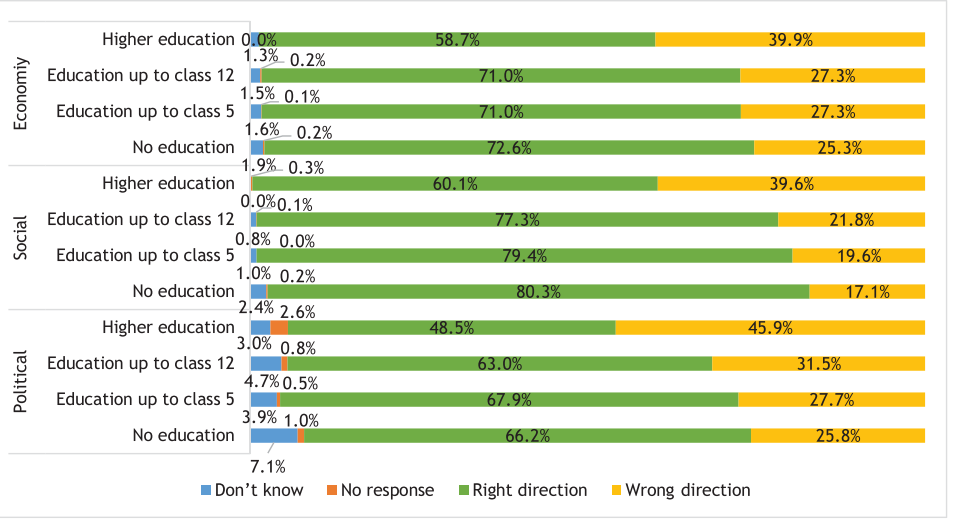



Figure 3.3: Respondents' opinions on whether Bangladesh is going in the right or wrong direction by education

In all three domains, the perceptions of male and female respondents were similar. By disaggregating the responses by gender, Annex 3.1 shows whether respondents think Bangladesh is going in the right or wrong direction on all three domains.

## 3.2. Country heading in the right directions: The reasons

Respondents who perceived that Bangladesh is going in the right direction in any of the three domains were asked to identify the reasons behind their opinions. Most of the respondents believed that Bangladesh is going in the right direction as a result of socio-economic improvements the country has achieved (Figure 3.4). Other reasons identified by respondents included improved infrastructure (63%), followed by the improvement in the economy (57%), overall development (47%), and improvement in education (30%). About 41% of the respondents pointed out better security, and law and order situation as two other major reasons. As seen, the lowest responses were recorded in the politics and governance categories. Altogether only about 23% believed that the political governance and stability have improved. In addition, about 10% mentioned the current digitization process of the country as a reason for their positive opinions.

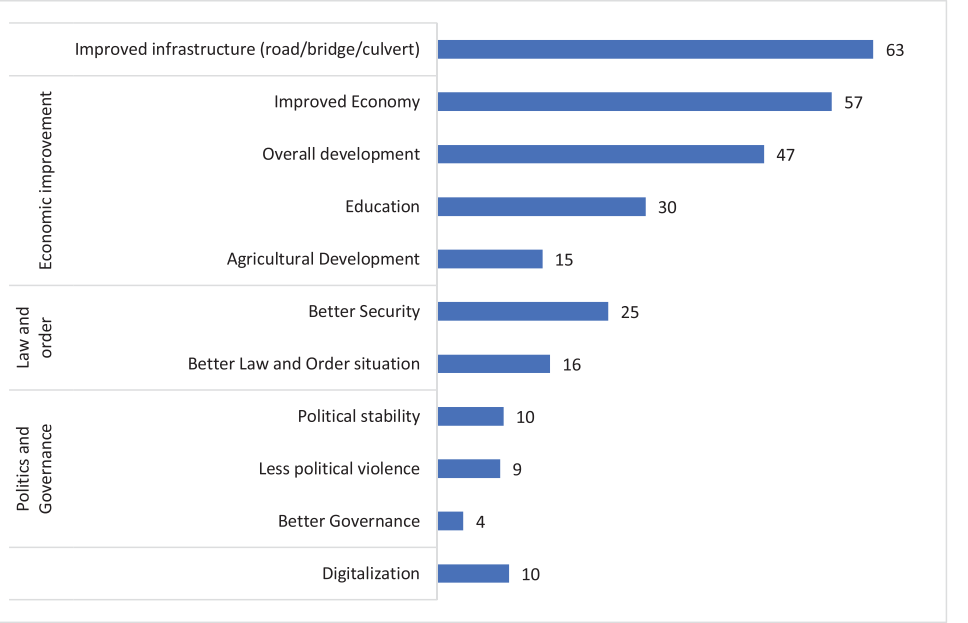



Figure 3.4: Reasons behind thinking Bangladesh is going in the right direction

This opinion also varied between the respondents of the highest and lowest income groups, likely due to their socio-economic and cultural contexts. About 41% of the respondents from the highest income group reported that education is playing an important role behind Bangladesh going in the right direction, whereas the same view was shared by only 24% of the respondents among the lowest income cohort. About 24% of the respondents from the lowest income group mentioned agricultural development as a reason behind Bangladesh's progress—something the highest income group had barely mentioned. Also, note that the difference in the area of digitization indicating perhaps much lower access of the poor in this domain. The perceptions of respondents from all income groups are reported in Annexure 3.2.

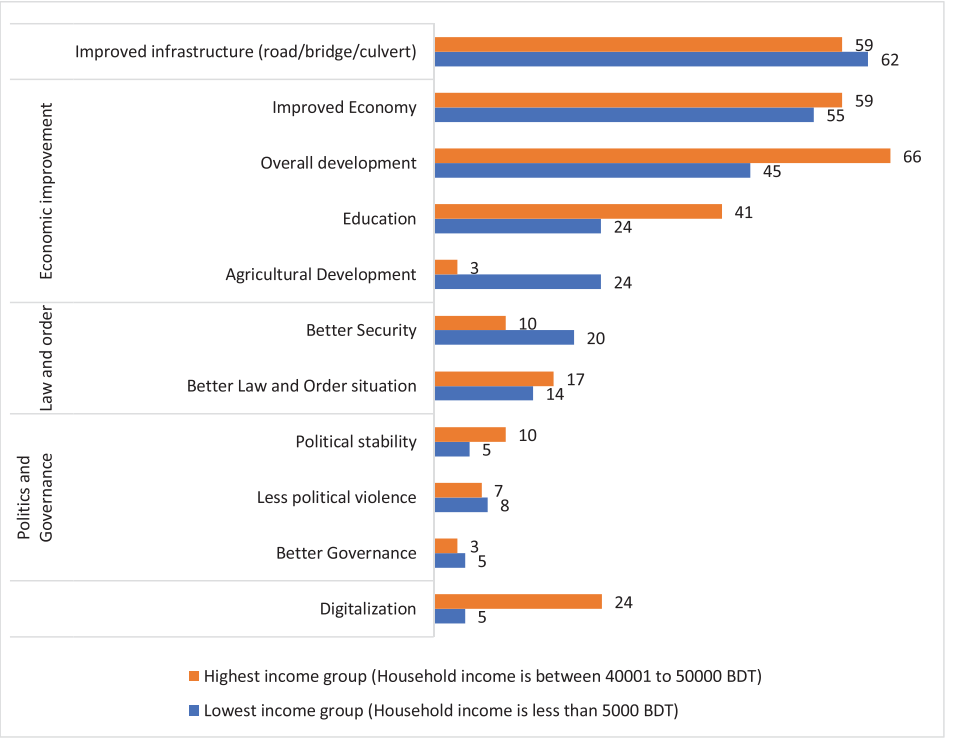



Figure 3.5: Reasons behind thinking Bangladesh is going in the right direction by income groups

The reason why respondents think Bangladesh is going in the right direction does not very much by area of living or educational qualification of the respondent. Disaggregated by area of living and educational qualification, Annex 3.3 reports the reasons respondents thought are responsible for Bangladesh's march in the right direction.

Compared to the year 2018, improved infrastructure, improved economy, and better security received much better support this year (Figure 3.6). Alternatively, support for the overall and agricultural development declined.

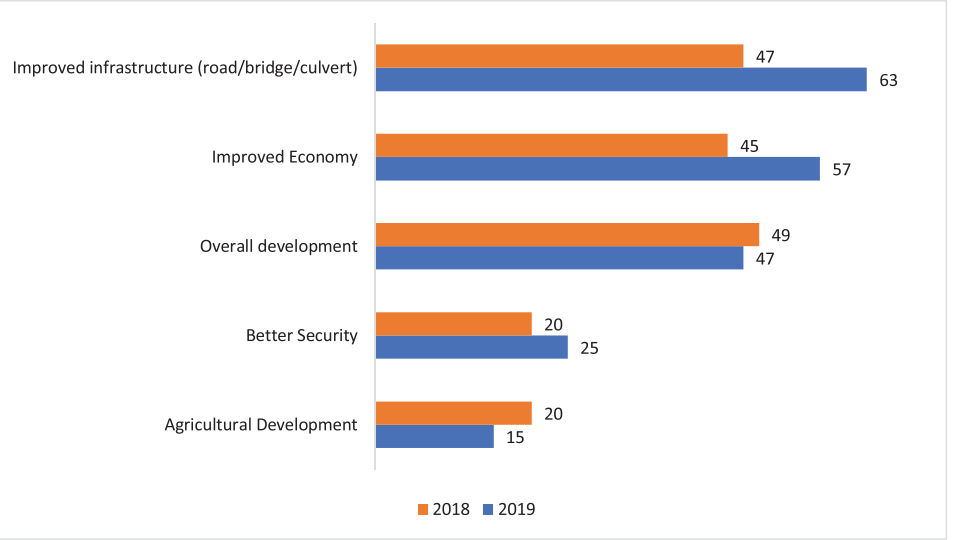



Figure 3.6: Reasons behind thinking Bangladesh is going in the right direction by year

## 3.3. Country heading in the wrong direction: The reasons

The respondents who thought Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction were also asked the reasons behind their opinions. About 69% of the respondents viewed economic/ infrastructure-related reasons as the primary factors behind their opinions. Among this particular group, 56% population mentioned the poor performance of the economy as a major reason. Another cluster of reasons relates to political/economic governance issues, such as increasing corruption (42%), political instability (32%), and over-dominance of one party (34%). Deteriorating law and order conditions were also mentioned by 35% of the respondents followed by another 27% respondents citing a decline freedom of opinion and human rights violation as reasons behind country's heading towards the wrong direction (Figure 3.7).

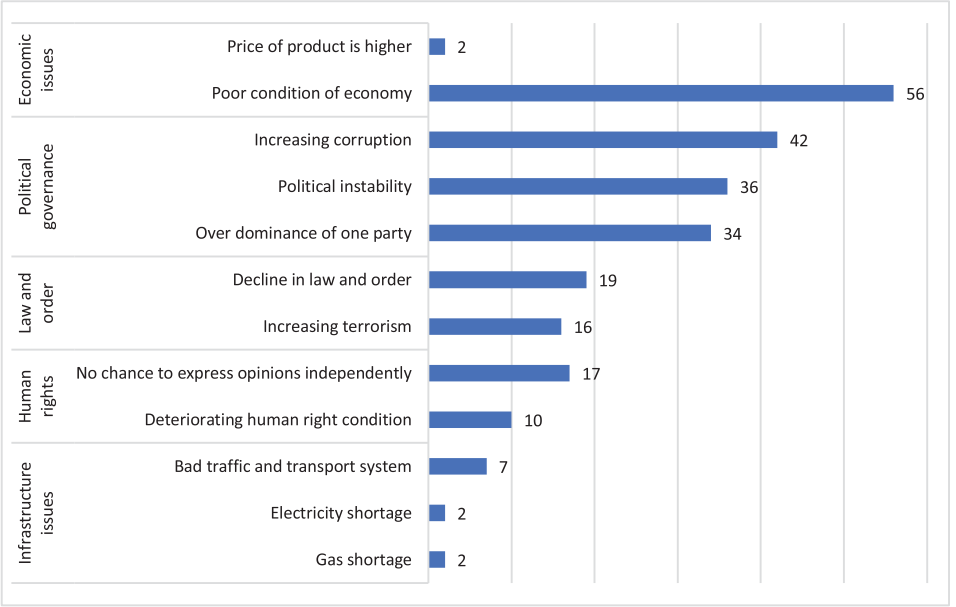



Figure 3.7: Reasons behind thinking Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction

Respondents from the highest income group considered poor economic performance as a primary reason for Bangladesh's heading in the wrong direction (70%) followed by the dominance of one party (52%). On the contrary, the lowest income group perceived increasing corruption (52%) and poor performance of the economy (43%) as the major reasons behind the country's heading in the wrong direction (Figure 3.8). The perceptions of respondents from all income groups are reported in Annexure 3.6.

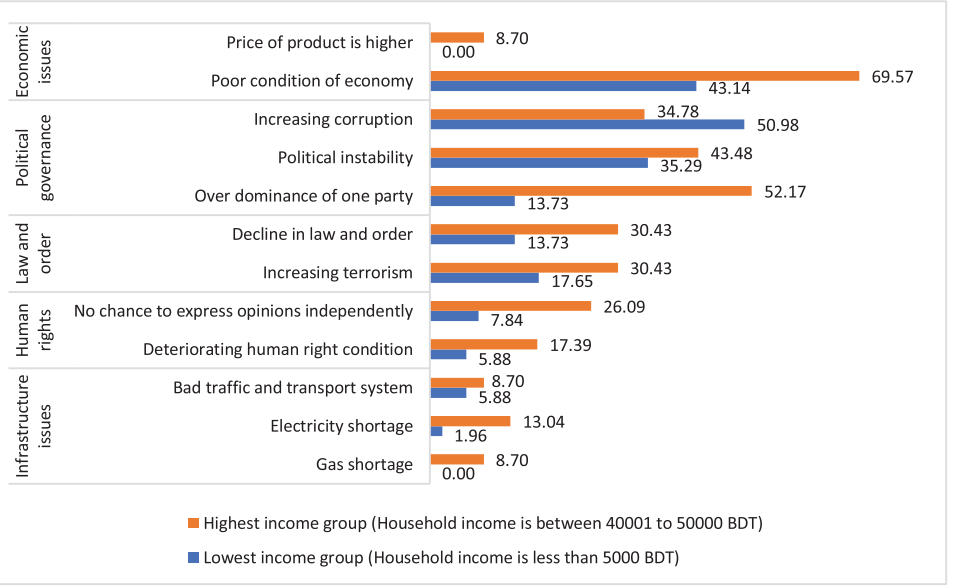



Figure 3.8: Reasons behind thinking Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction by income group

The reasons why respondents think that Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction are same for respondents from both urban and rural areas. Disaggregated by area of living and educational qualification, Annex 3.5 reports the reasons why respondents thought Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction.

Comparing with the 2018 survey, the share of respondents who cited the poor performance of the economy as a reason why Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction seems to have increased quite a lot recently (Figure 3.9). Political instability, on the other hand, has decreased by 25% in 2019 compared to 2018. Not many variations can be seen in other categories.

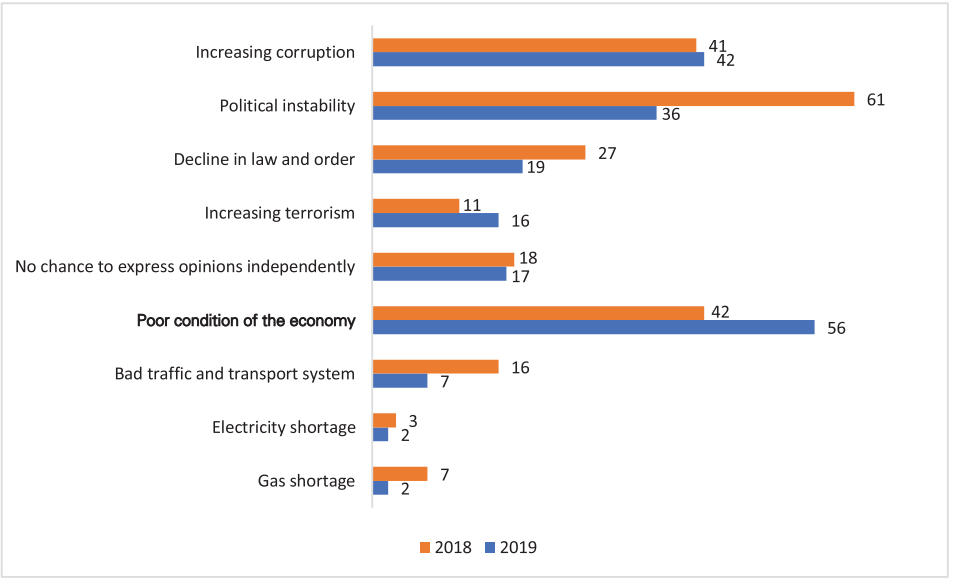



Figure 3.9: Reasons behind thinking Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction by year

## 3.4. Biggest challenge in Bangladesh

Respondents were asked to state the biggest and the second-biggest problem in Bangladesh (Figure 3.10). The largest proportion (33%) of the respondents identified the price increase of essential goods as the biggest problem followed by unemployment and corruption. About 1% of the respondents stated that there is no problem in Bangladesh.

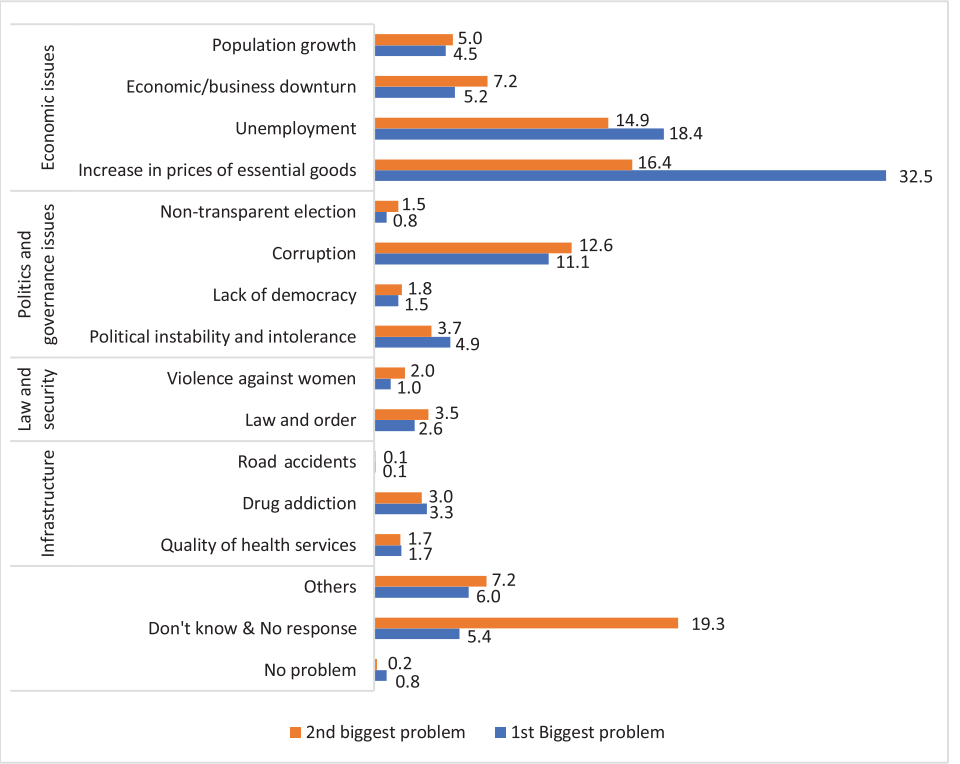



Figure 3.10: Biggest problem of Bangladesh

Note that only about 2% of the respondents said that lack of democracy is the biggest problem of Bangladesh followed by another 1% who mention the lack of transparent elections. Violence against women and the quality of healthcare service were also mentioned by about 1% and 2% of the respondents, respectively. Also, only 0.1% of the respondents identified road accidents as the biggest problem in Bangladesh.

Among the respondents of the lowest income group, 47% stated the price hike as the biggest problem in Bangladesh followed by unemployment and corruption (Figure 3.11). In the highest income group, the majority of the respondents picked unemployment as the biggest problem followed by the price hike of essential products, corruption, and political instability. The perceptions of respondents from all income groups are reported in Annexure 3.7.

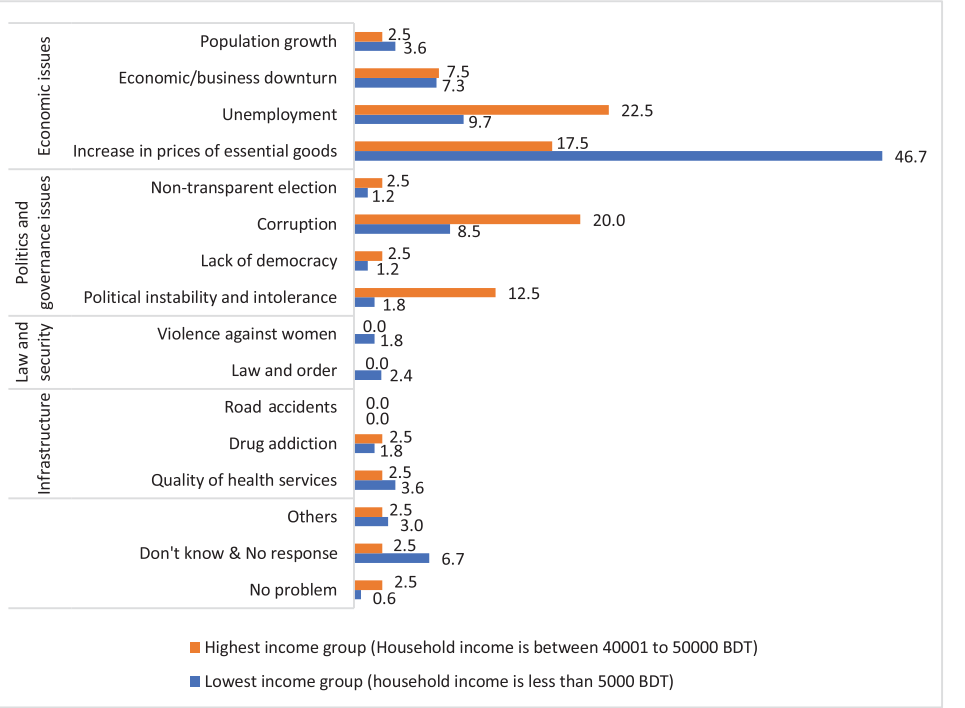



Figure 3.11: Biggest problem of Bangladesh by income group

And disaggregated by respondents' education, respondents' opinions on the biggest problem in Bangladesh are reported in the Annexure 3.8.

# 4. CITIZENS' PERCEPTION OF POLITICS AND ELECTED LEADERS

## 4.1. Awareness about and expectations from national representatives

The respondents were asked if they knew the names of the parliamentarians who represent their areas in the national parliament (Figure 4.1). About 82% of them could name their Members of Parliament (MPs) correctly, while only 4% failed to do so. Comparing this data with the previous the Foundation surveys (2017 and 2018), not much deviance can be noted. In 2017 and 2018, 86% and 81% respondents, respectively, could identify their MPs.

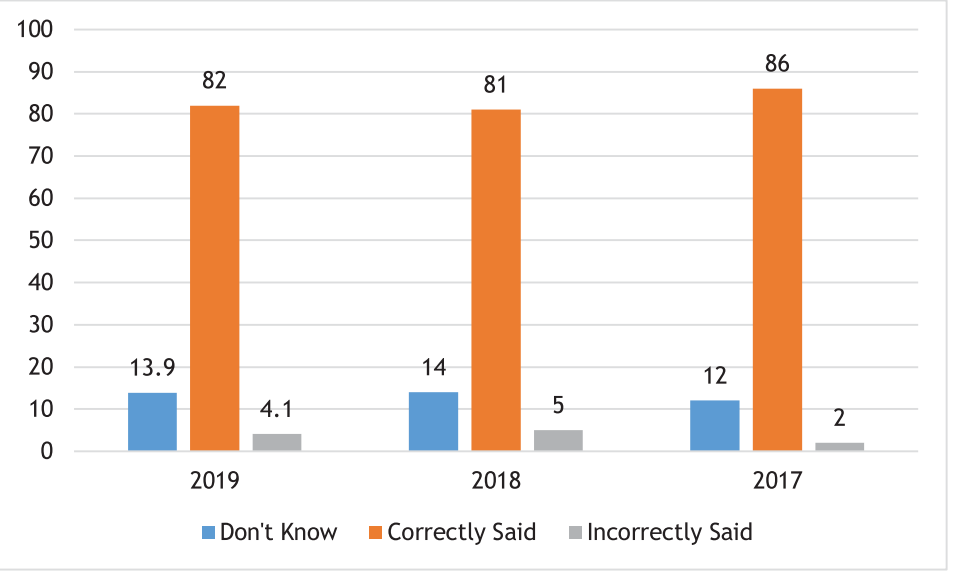



Figure 4.1: Could people name their MPs right?

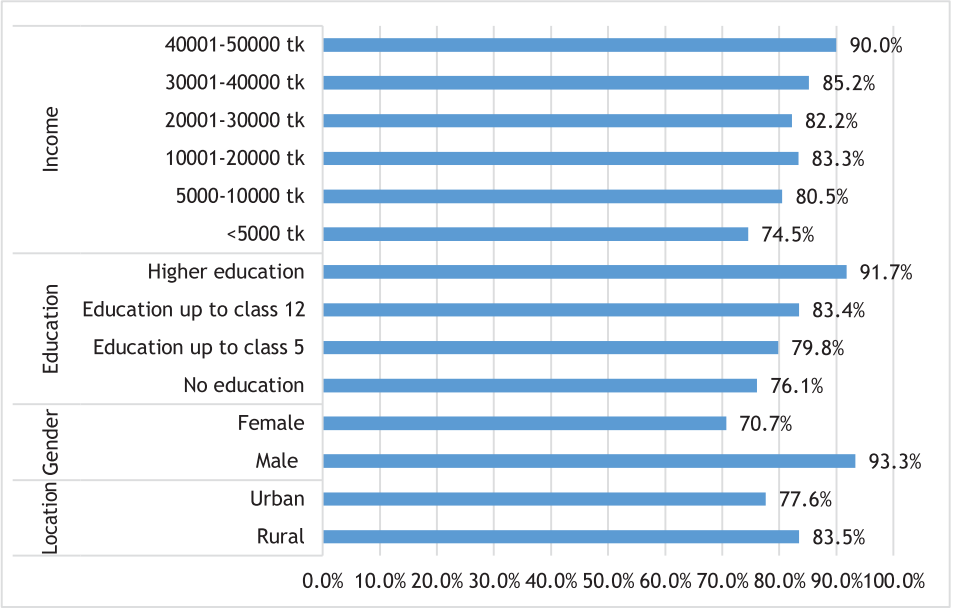
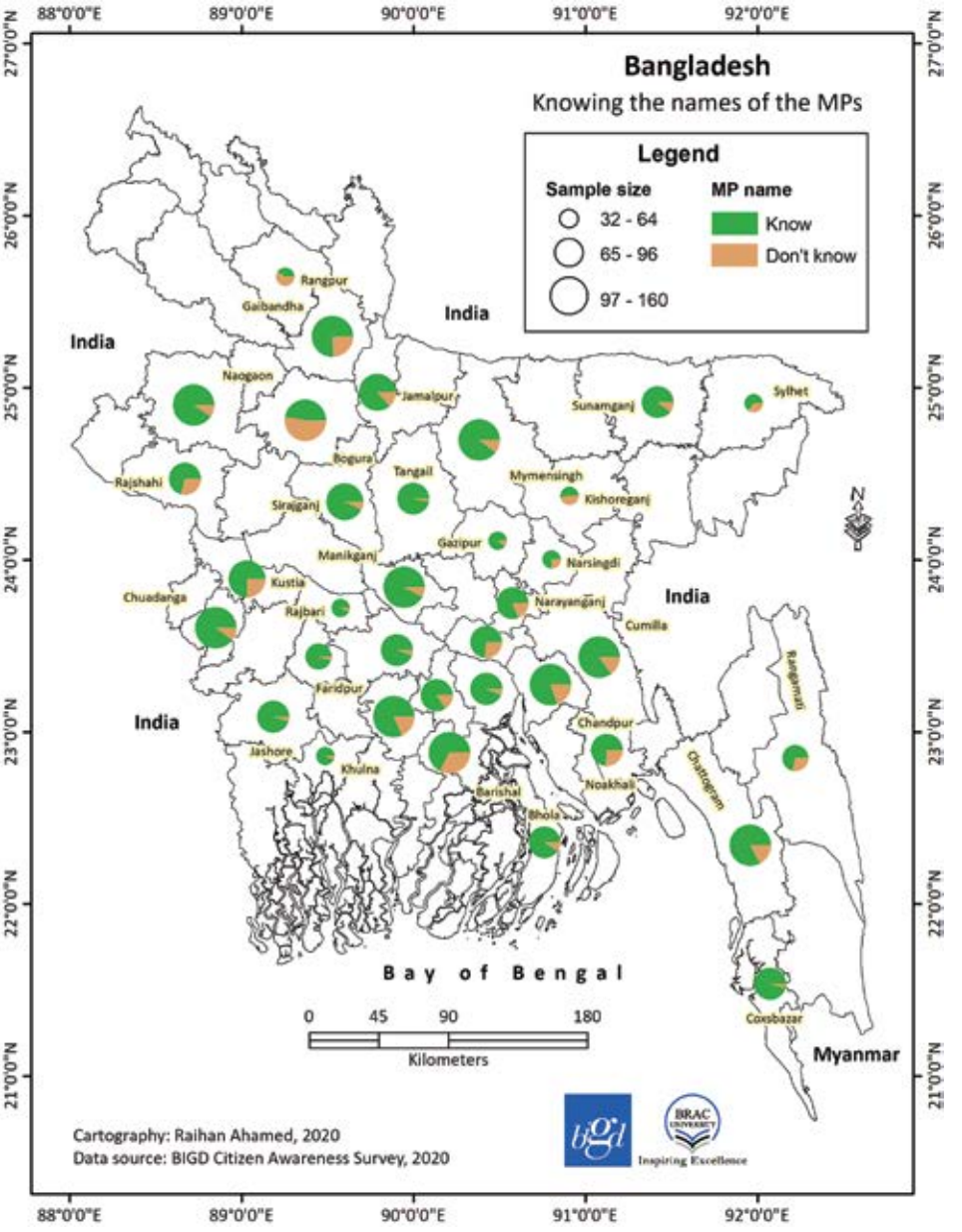



Figure 4.2: Could people name their MPs right? (by location, gender, education, and income)

Education seems to have an impact on the quality of the responses (Figure 4.2). As the level of education increases, people tend to have more information about the MPs in their areas. Around 92% of the people with higher education could name the MP right (which was 96% in 2018); whereas for people with no education, the rate is 76% (which was 68% in 2018).

Income-segregated responses show another increasing pattern (Figure 4.2). For the lowest income group, around 75% of the people could name their MPs correctly and it gradually increased to 90% for the highest income group. Men fared better in naming the MPs right than women (93% vs. 71%) (Figure 4.2). About 24% of women also said they do not know the MP's name, whereas only 4% of men failed to respond.




Map 4.1: Could people name their MP's right (by district)

The next question inquired whether the respondents know if the MPs visited their areas in last one or two year(s), to which 64% said "yes" and 29% said "no." The visits, compared to 2018, seem to have reduced by almost 12%.

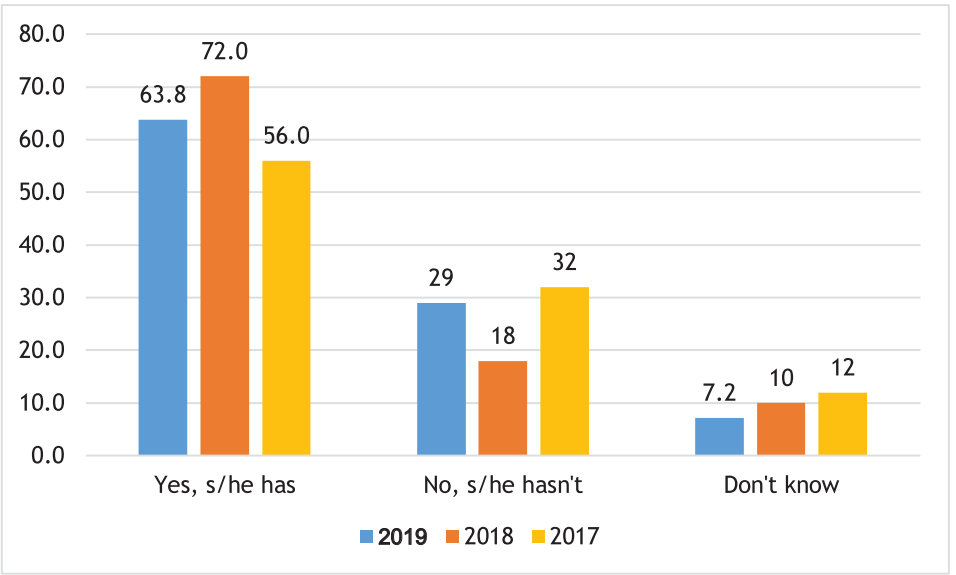



Figure 4.3: MP visit in the respondent's area in the last one/two year(s)

The survey also wanted to explore citizens' perception of both what MPs currently do and what they should do. Generally, it seemed that they see their MPs as people who work for their localities rather than representing them in the parliament (Figure 4.4). About 88% of the citizens think MPs work for local development and 81% think that they solve problems for the local people. Responses about what MPs should do are also aligned—about 90% of the respondents believe that MPs should work for local development and 88% would like to see MPs solving problems for the local people (Figure 4.4).

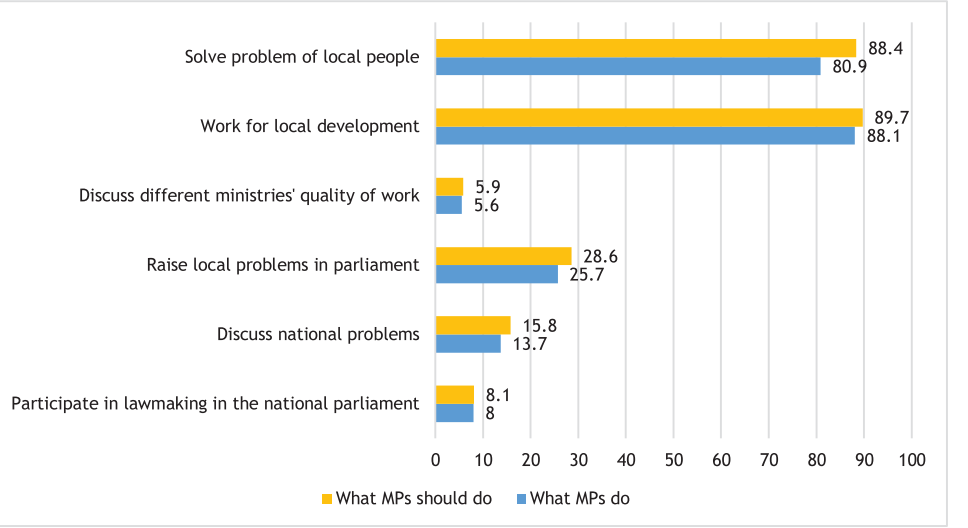



Figure 4.4: What do MPs currently do and should do?

When disaggregated by education, the difference in respondents' perceptions of MPs' job becomes pronounced. Figure 4.5 shows the comparison between only the highest and lowest education categories (for detailed findings, see Annexure 4: Table 4.1). Except for the very similar reporting on MPs working for local development, all other categories received more responses from the highly educated group. For instance, in contrast to 37% of the people in the highly educated group, 18% of the people with no education prioritized their MPs raising local problems in the parliament. About 10% of the people with no education thought their MPs discuss national problems, whereas 27% of the highly educated people opted for the same. Participating in law-making get only 6% support from people with no education as opposed to 20% from the highly educated ones (Figure 4.5).

A similar pattern is noticed across the education groups regarding what MPs should do (Figure 4.5). MPs role in solving local problems and working for local development are equally prioritized by the highest and lowest education groups. But highly educated people also prefer their MPs to raise local problems in the parliament, discuss national problems, and participate in law-making significantly more than the people with no education.

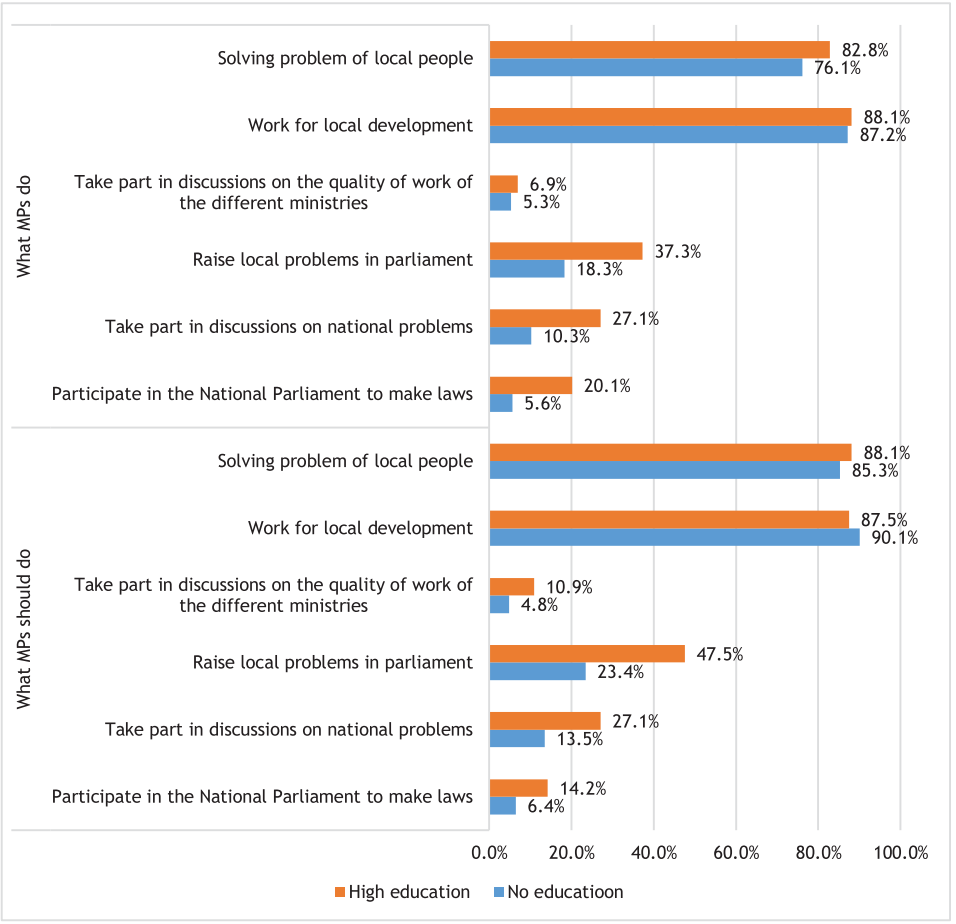



Figure 4.5: What MPs do and should do? (education-wise)

Income segregated responses show almost similar pattern (Figure 4.6). Taking part in discussions on national issues, national law-making, and raising local problems in parliament receive more support from higher income categories compared to the lower ones. The support for local development and helping out local people get overwhelming support from all categories irrespective of their income.

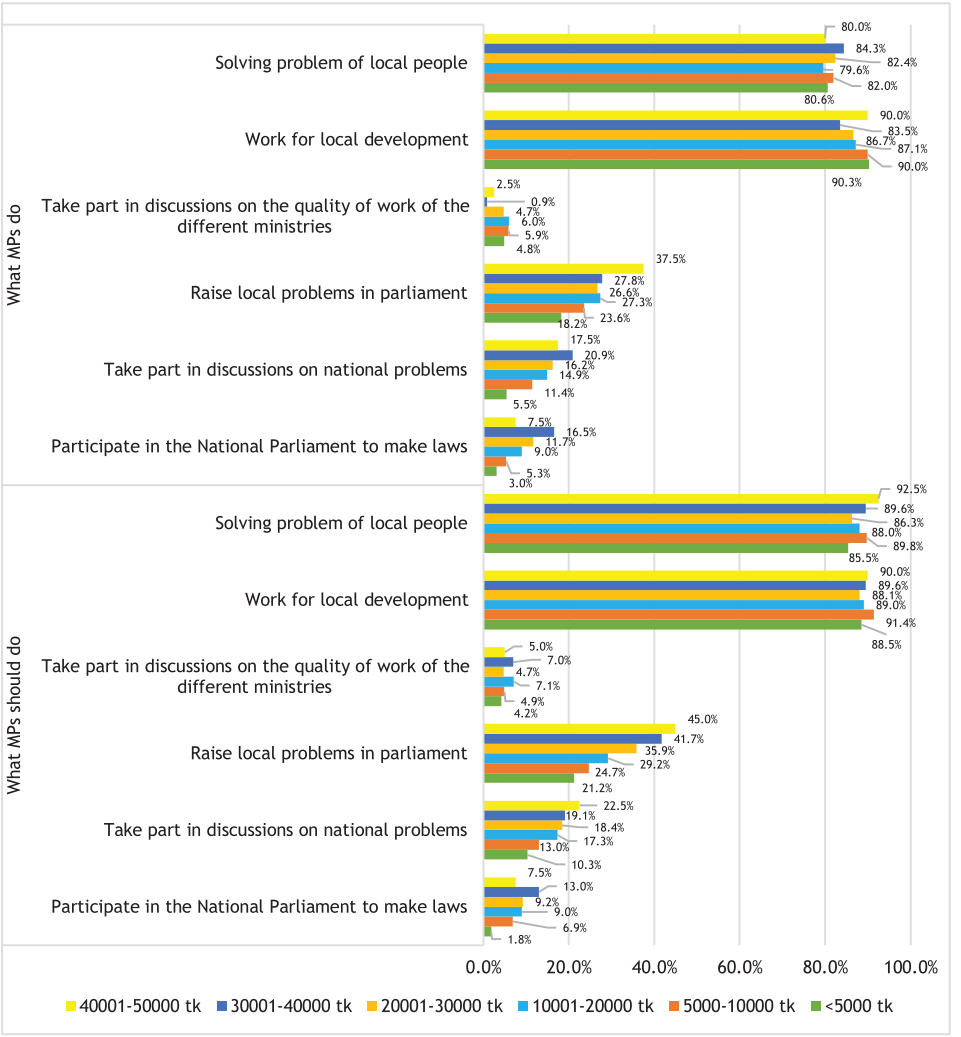



Figure 4.6: What MPs do and should do? (income-wise)

The next question asked was on how satisfied people are with their MPs' work. Compared with the Foundation 2018 survey responses (60%), respondents were found to be more satisfied (very and fairly combined) with their MPs in 2019 (73%). Responses were quite similar across different income, gender, and education groups (see Annex 4: Table 4.2).

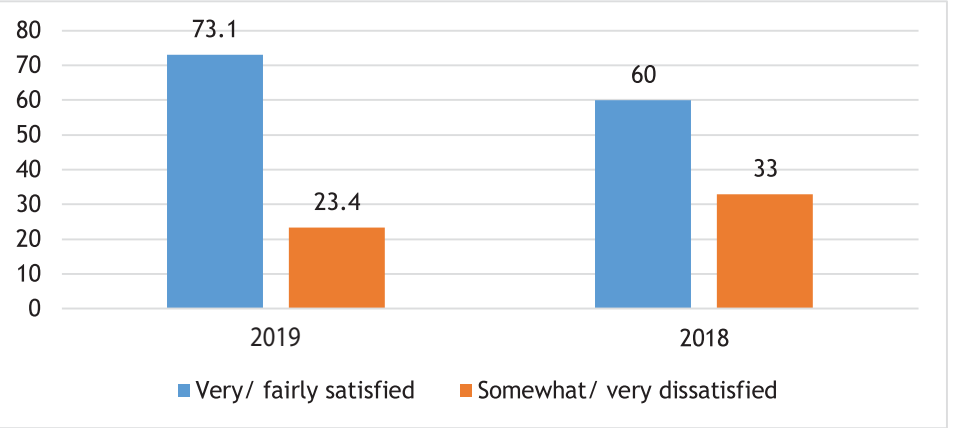



Figure 4.7: What is your opinion regarding the job that your MP is doing?

The survey asked whether respondents perceive the MPs as people who care about ordinary citizens. A total of 63% of the respondents (combining response categories strongly agree and somewhat agree) felt MPs care about the general citizens, whereas 35% of them (combining response categories strongly disagree and somewhat disagree) felt the opposite. Across the different education groups, not much variance was noticed; however, the highly educated group seemed to agree more with the statement that MPs care about the ordinary people compared to the lowest education category. Compared to respondents with higher education, 8% more people with no education felt that MPs do not care about general citizens (64% in higher education group compared to 54% in lowest). The difference in responses across income groups is not very pronounced (Figure 4.8).

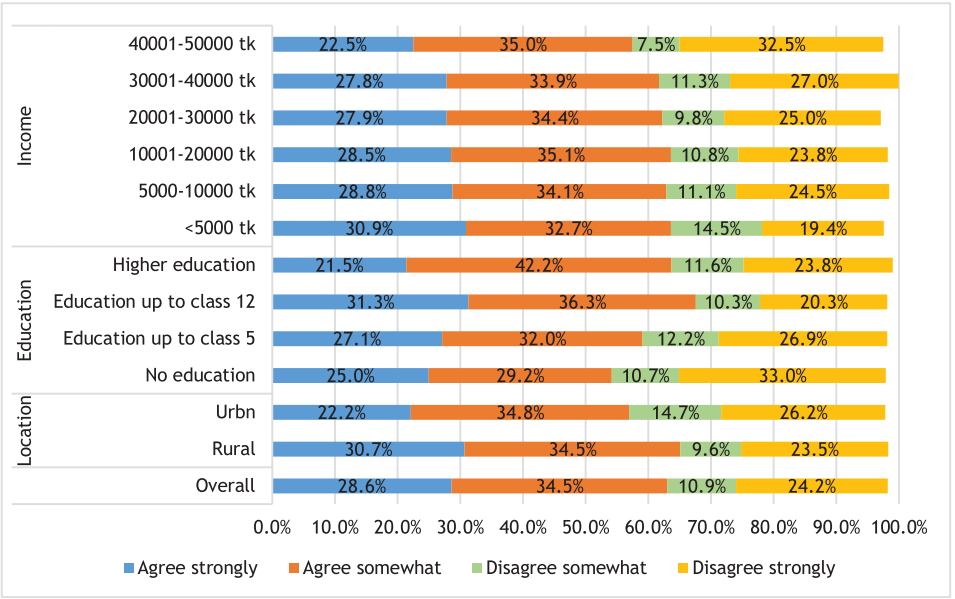
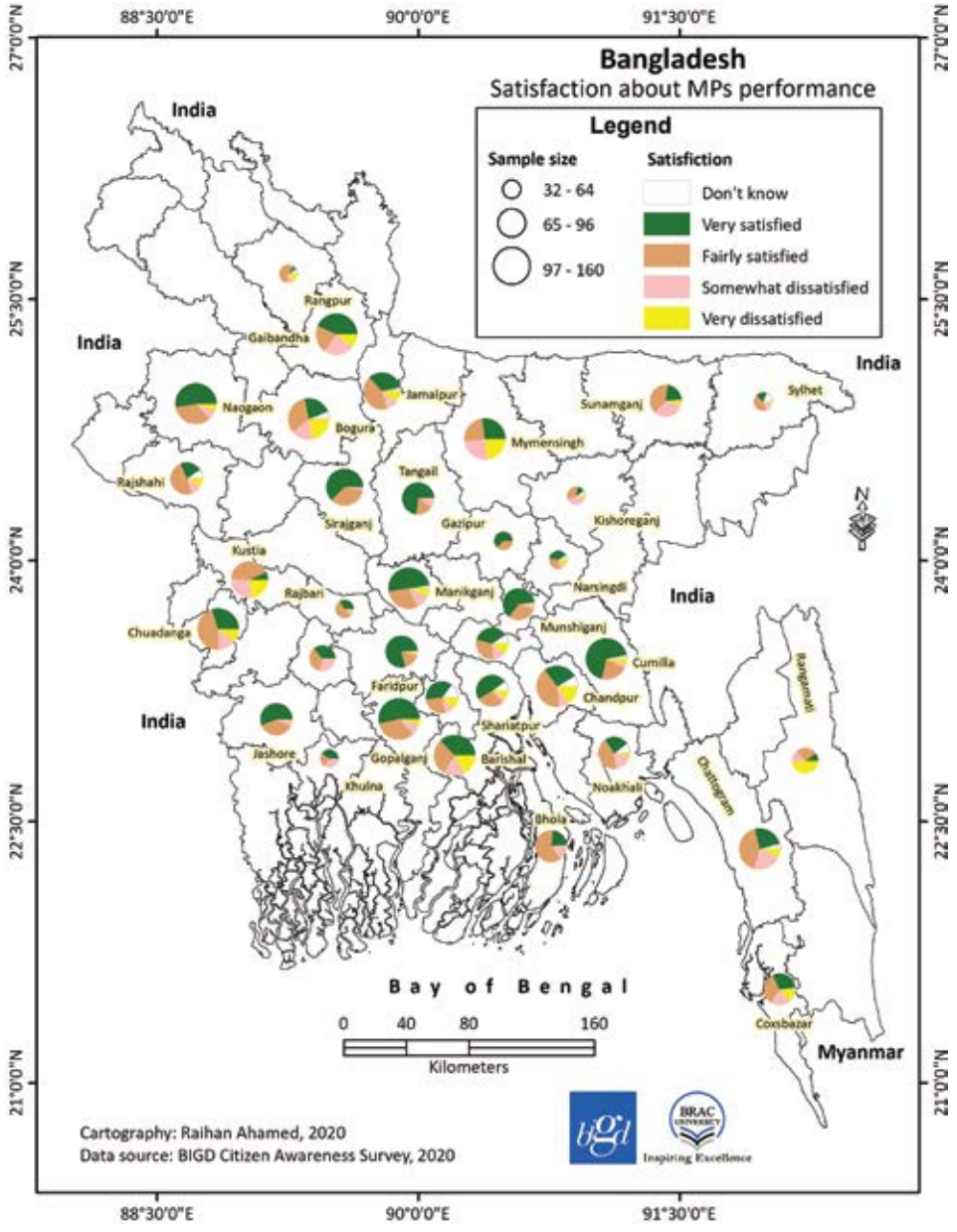



Figure 4.8: "MPs care about general citizens" by location, education, and income categories




Map 4.2: Satisfaction regarding MPs performance by district

## 4.2. Awareness about and expectations from local representatives

Respondents were found to be more aware of their local representatives. Around 87% and 95% of the respondents could name the municipality mayor and Union Parishad (UP) chairperson, respectively. Income segregated responses do not show much variance.

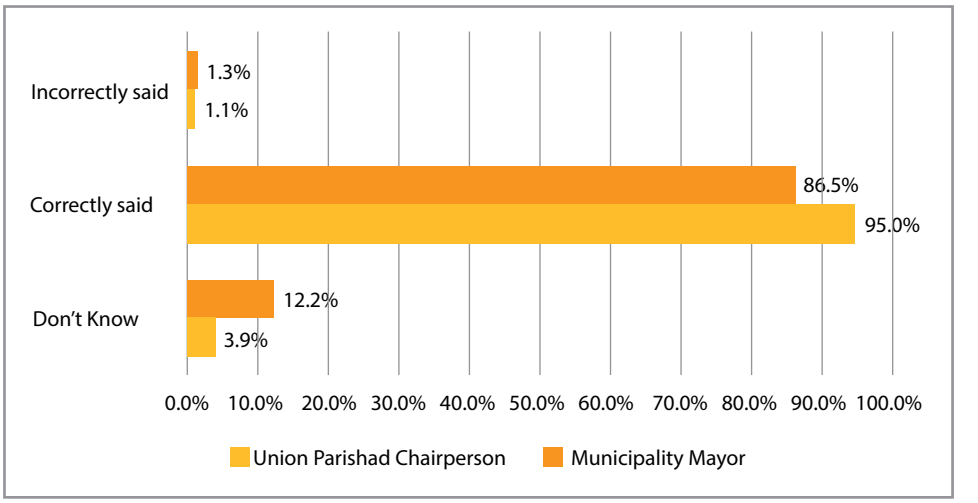
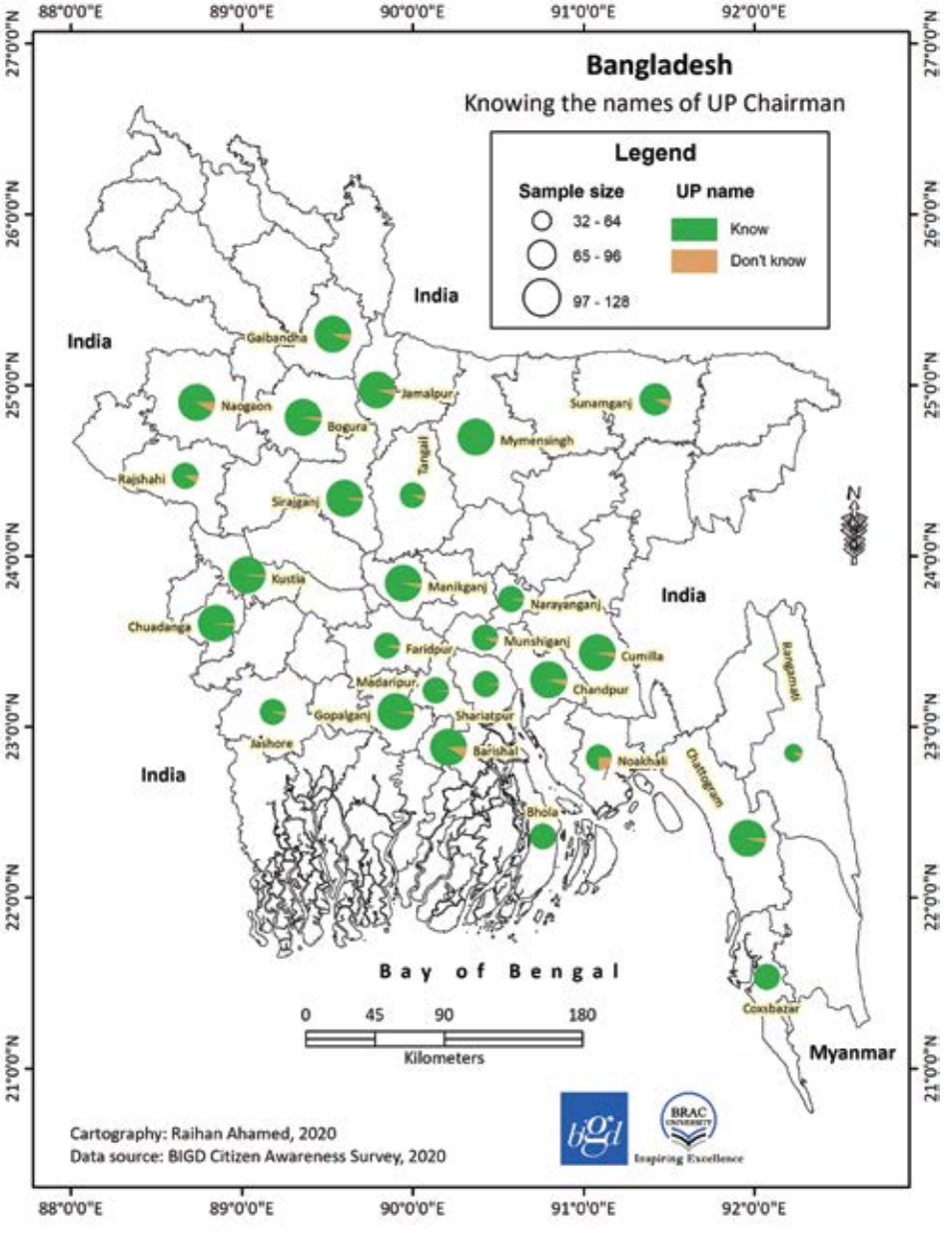
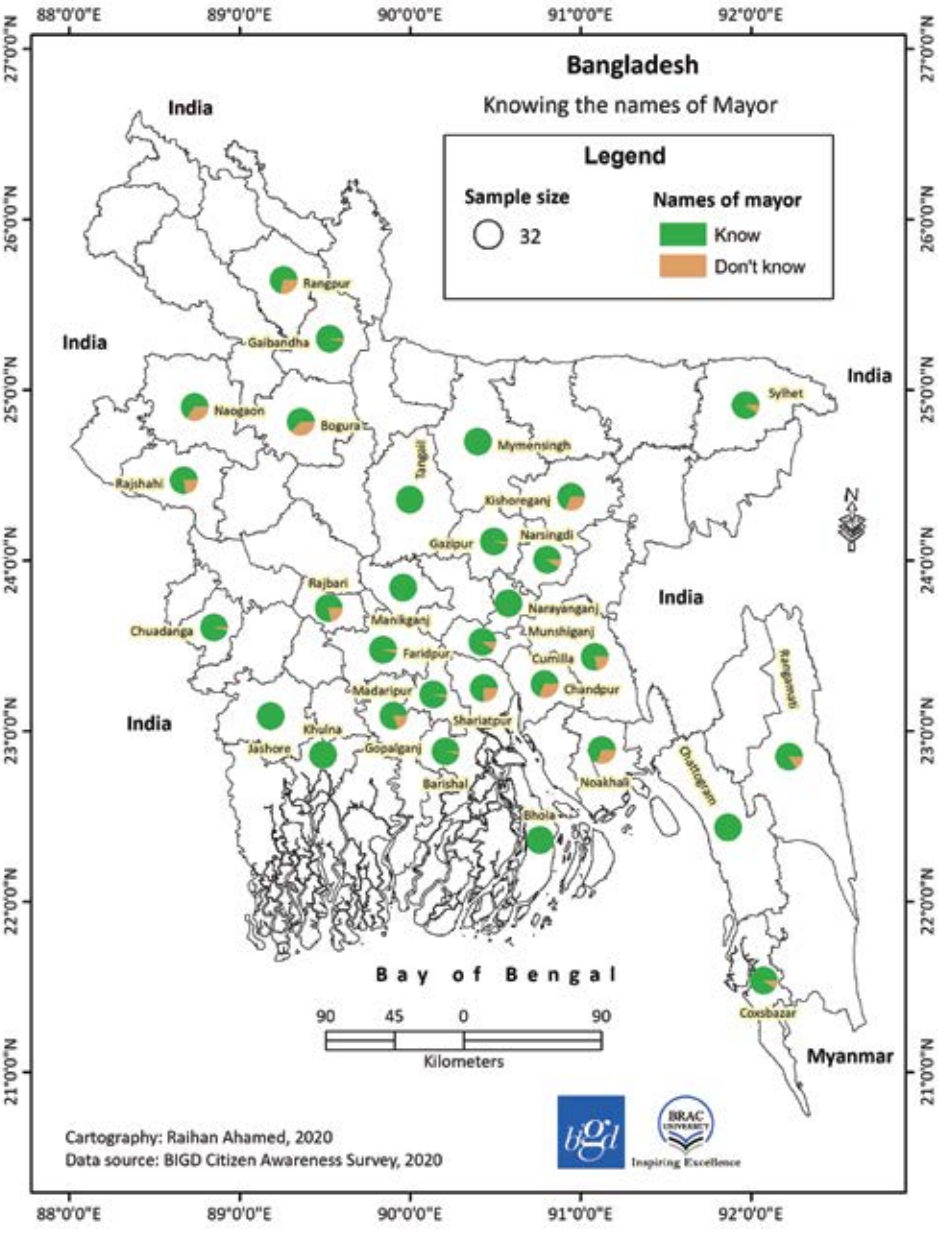



Figure 4.9: Could people name their Union Parishad (UP) chairperson/municipality mayor right?




Map 4.3: Could people name their UP chairperson right? (by district)




Map 4.4: Could people name their mayors right? (by district)

However, only about 37% and 18% of the respondents contacted the UP chairperson and municipality mayor, respectively, to seek help in solving their personal problems. Gender segregated responses show that women tend to seek less help from these local leaders. Very few differences were noticed when responses were segregated by income and education (Annex 4: Table 4.3).

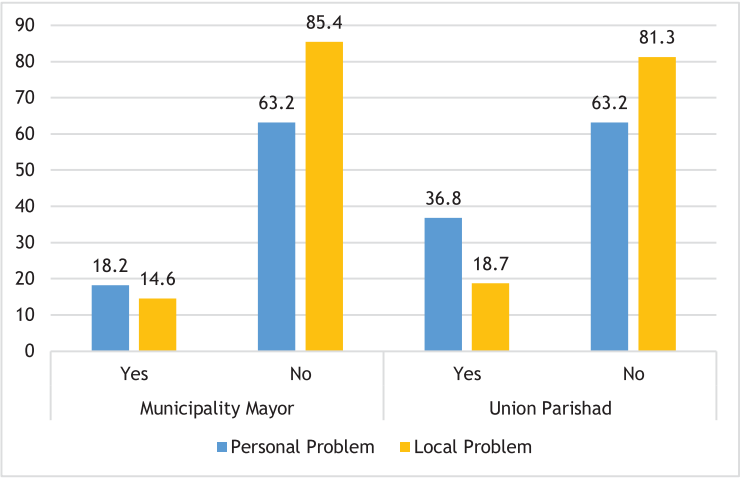



Figure 4.10: Have you ever contacted your union/municipality chairperson to help you in solving any of your personal and local problems?

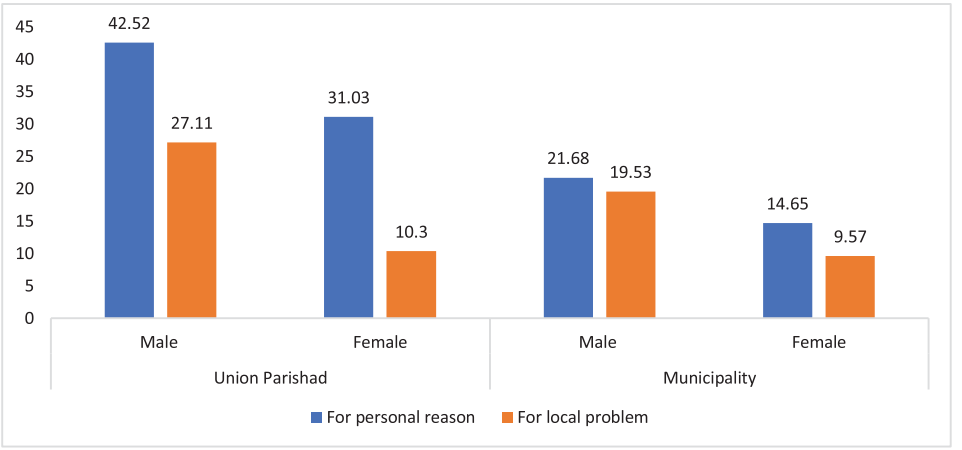



Figure 4.11: Have you ever contacted your union/municipality chairperson to help you in solving any of your personal and local problems?

A significantly lower number of people sought the chairperson and mayor's help in solving local problems—15% in the case of municipality mayor and 19% in the case of UP chairperson (Figure 4.10).

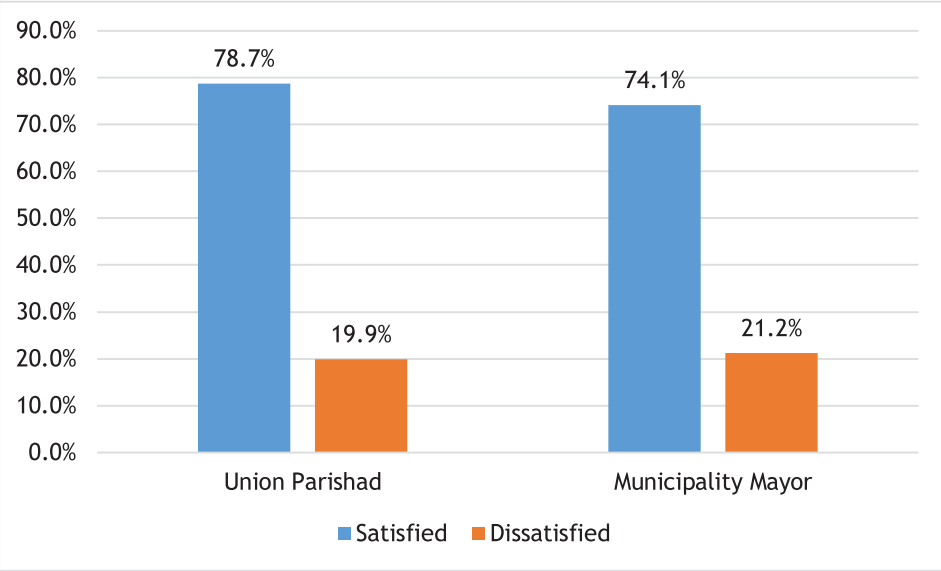



Figure 4.12: Opinion regarding the UP chairperson/municipality mayor's work by location

Although the respondents did not show much interest in terms of contacting the UP chairperson or the municipality mayor, an overwhelming majority of them are satisfied with their work. About 79% of the rural population are satisfied while only 20% reported being dissatisfied. As for the urban population, 74% were satisfied as opposed to 21% who were dissatisfied (Figure 4.12).

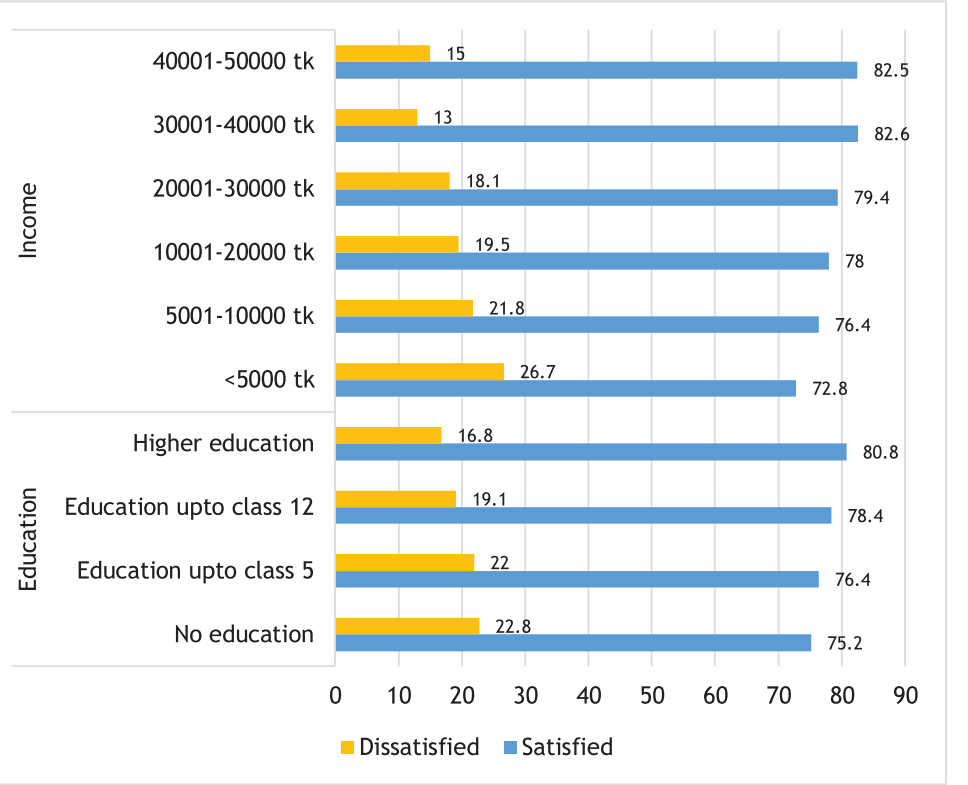
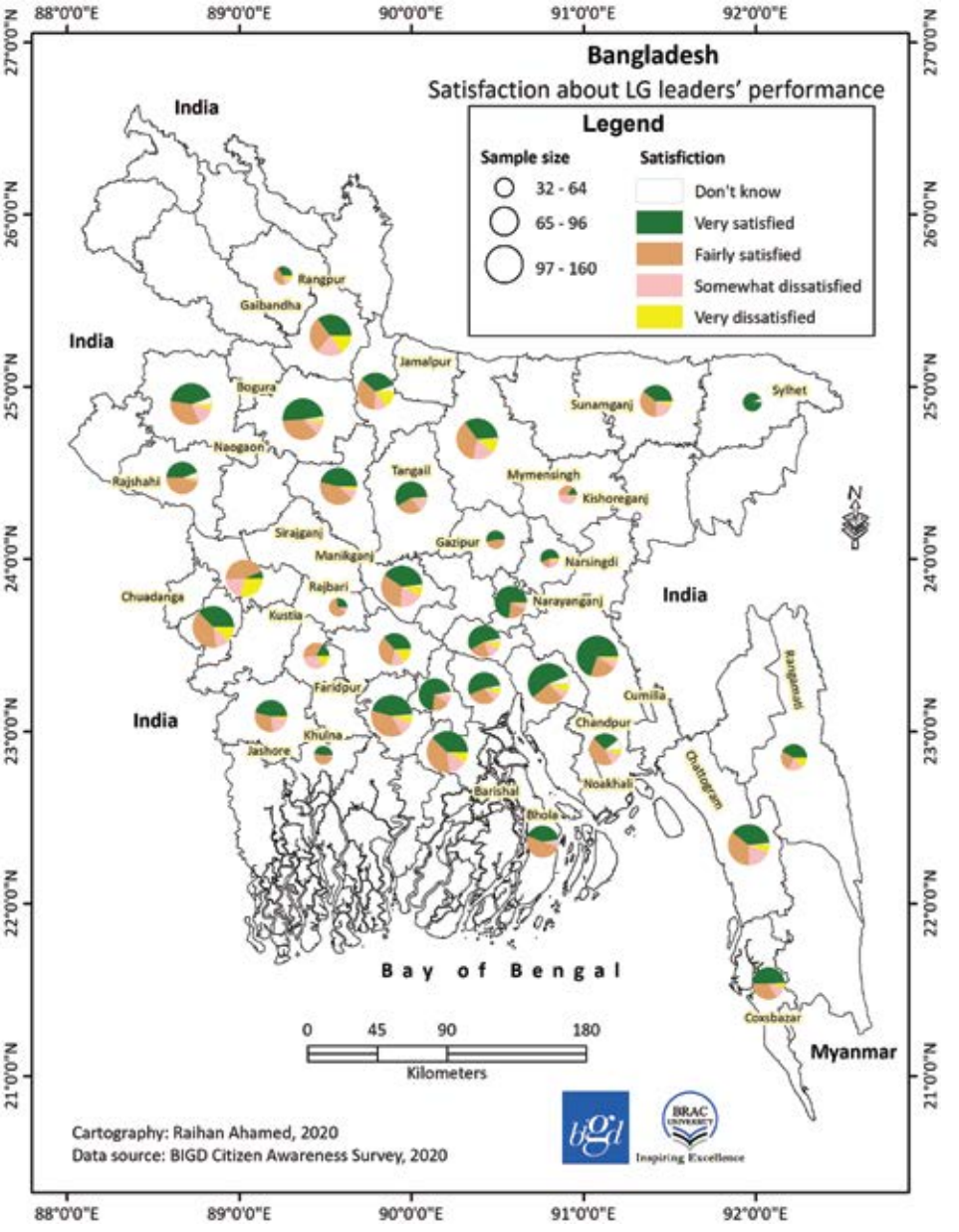



Figure 4.13: Opinion regarding the UP chairperson/municipality mayor's work

There is not much variation across education categories; however, it appears that respondents belonging to higher education and income categories are more satisfied with the local government leaders compared to the citizens belonging to the lowest tier (Figure 4.13).




Map 4.5: Satisfaction about LG leader's performance (by district)

## 4.3 Political identity, loyalty, and attitude towards political parties

This section shows the different attributes (as pointed out by the survey respondents) of political candidates that tend to determine their electability.

The responses have been divided into three broad groups, as seen in Figure 4.14. While voting, it seems that most of the respondents (60%) consider the personal traits of candidates as the most important factor. Followed by the support for personal traits, networking and accessibility and availability of the candidate received support from 38% of the respondents. Political identity and career of the candidate received a mere 2% support. Within the personal trait group, personal character got the highest response of about 25%, followed by education (16%) and then past track record which is 6%. In the previous years, personal character was also the most chosen option, as about 33% of the respondents chose it in 2018. As seen, the network of the candidate, i.e. how accessible and available he/she is to the respondents/voters, also played a major role for electability. Around 20% of the respondents viewed their personal connection with the candidate as an important factor for choosing a candidate, followed by 18% viewing the availability and accessibility as the most important attributes.

Some percentage increases in the respondents' preference for a candidate's education can be observed over the past year, from 15% in 2018 to 20% in 2019. Among the ones who chose education as the first attribute, were mostly people with higher education (30%) (Figure 4.15). It is also noticeable that people with no education (about 26%) value personal connection with the candidate almost three times more than highly educated ones (about 9%). Note that the higher educated group believes that the availability and accessibility of a candidate is the second most important factor (25%) followed by education. Interestingly, the preference for political identity and political experience/career remained very low across all categories of respondents.

Across income, location, and gender groups, no significant variance was noticed. For detailed information, please see Annex 4: Table 4.4.

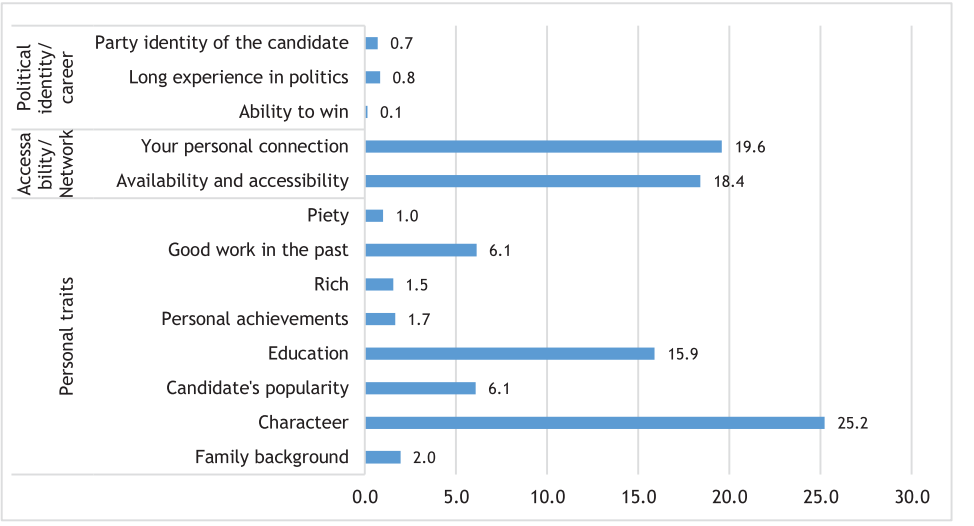



Figure 4.14: The most important attributes in electing the representative

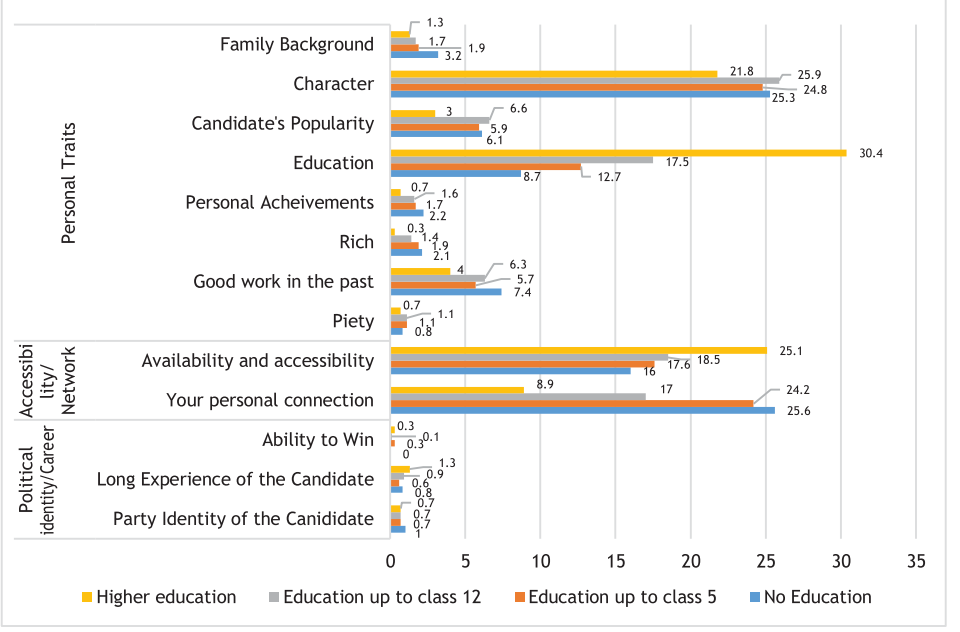



Figure 4.15: The most important attributes in electing the representative (education-wise)

The next question in the survey aimed to identify the most important attributes that make a party electable (Figure 4.16). Survey results show that about 39% of the citizens put programmatic accomplishment of the political party as the most important attribute in electing their government. Another 23% considered the party programmatic proposals, followed by 19% of the respondents to whom party history comes first. It appears that integrity and internal democratic practice of a party are less important compared to the party programs (proposed) and programmatic accomplishments. Only 0.4% wanted their leaders to be honest, 0.1% wanted a corruption-free party, followed by another mere 0.01% who demanded internal democracy in the party. Note that the religious identity of the party also matters very little to the citizens (2.7%).

Across other respondents groups, there are not many differences (Annex 4: Table 4.5).

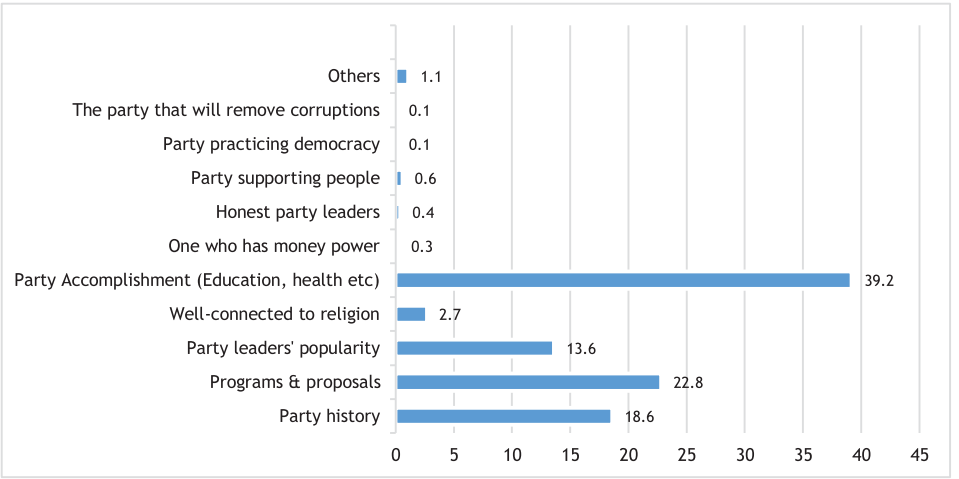



Figure 4.16: The most important attributes in electing the government

## Importance of party identity

The next question aimed to understand how much importance citizens give to party identity of a candidate in terms of his/her electability (Figure 4.17). When asked how likely the respondents are to vote for a candidate of their preference if he/she changed the political party, approximately 76% of the respondents said that they are unlikely (very and somewhat) to vote for that person. Only a total of 24% of the respondents answered that they will still vote for that person, even if he/she changes party affiliation. With the education level increasing, respondents shifted more towards choosing the candidate of their choice regardless of the party identity. About 33% of the respondents with higher education are likely to choose such candidate as opposed to 21% of the respondents with no education. However, disaggregation by income reveals that the highest and lowest income group are most loyal to the parties while the middle-income categories are comparatively less loyal. In rural regions, the importance of party identity is high than in urban.

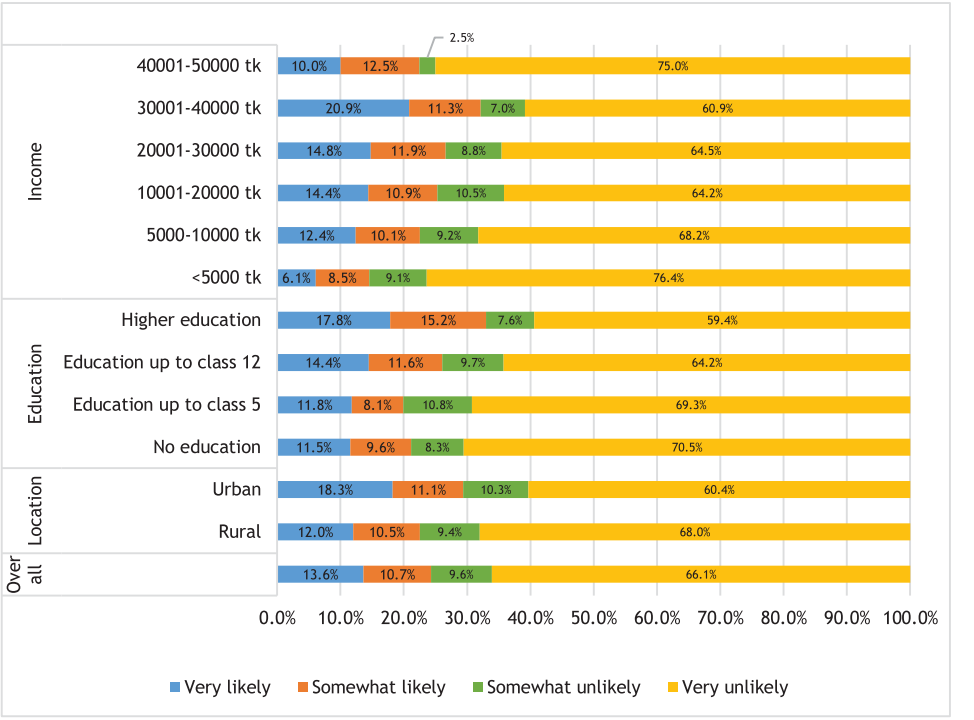



Figure 4.17: How likely are you to still vote for a candidate of your preference, if he/she changes the political party?

The next question brought responses quite in contrast with the previous one (Figure 4.18). Although it looked like people are rigid about their party identification, people are still more likely to affiliate themselves with a new party (i.e. switch to a new party) similar to their views. About 67% of the respondents voted that they are likely (very and some what) to switch, while 33% said that they are unlikely to switch their party affiliation. The differences across groups are very minimal. Respondents, irrespective of location, gender, education, and income groups, are likely to switch to a party if it is aligned to their opinion. The percentages are slightly high among urban respondents, male respondents, and respondents belonging to the highest education group.

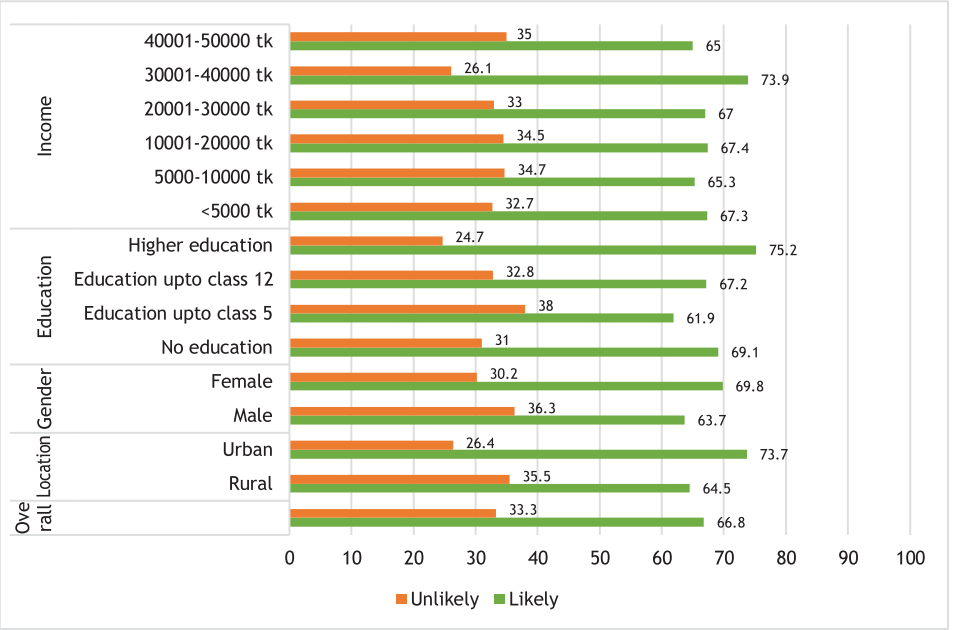



Figure 4.18: If a new party closer to your views started a platform, how likely are you to switch to that party?

## Political identity and access to services

In the next section, the respondents were asked how much political identities affect the access to different services. In contrast to about 27% of the respondents who said political identity has no influence on accessing justice, the majority (71%) of the citizens think that affiliating with the right party can have large or some influence on accessing justice. In accessing public services, around 68% of the people thought political identity can have large or some influence and 30% felt that political identity does not matter at all or can have little influence in accessing public services. Respondents had quite a mix of opinions when it came to the influence of political identity in conducting business. About 45% of the citizens thought political identity has little to no influence in conducting business, whereas 51% of the people felt that this particular identity leaves a considerable influence on doing business. Moreover, 67% of the population felt that political identity helps one in accessing administration, whereas 31% disagreed with the notion.

In all these categories, no significant variance across location, gender, income, and education are noticed (Annex 4: Table 4.6).

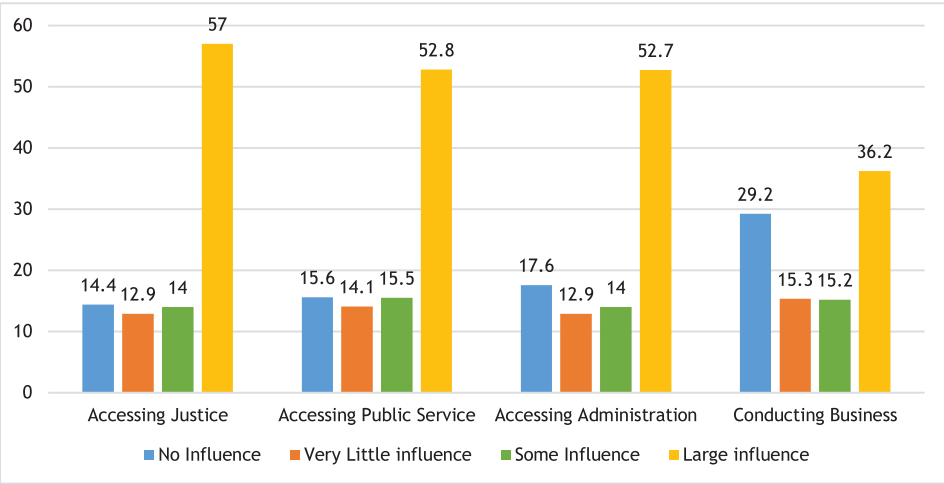



Figure 4.19: Influence of political identity in accessing justice, public service, administration, and conducting business

Next, the survey asked the respondents if they think political parties care about general people. Although people were rigid about their party affiliation, a total of 56% of the respondents disagreed and felt that they are not cared for. Around 43% of the people agreed with the notion that political parties care about them. The percentage of people disagreeing with the statement is higher among the urban population compared to that in rural.

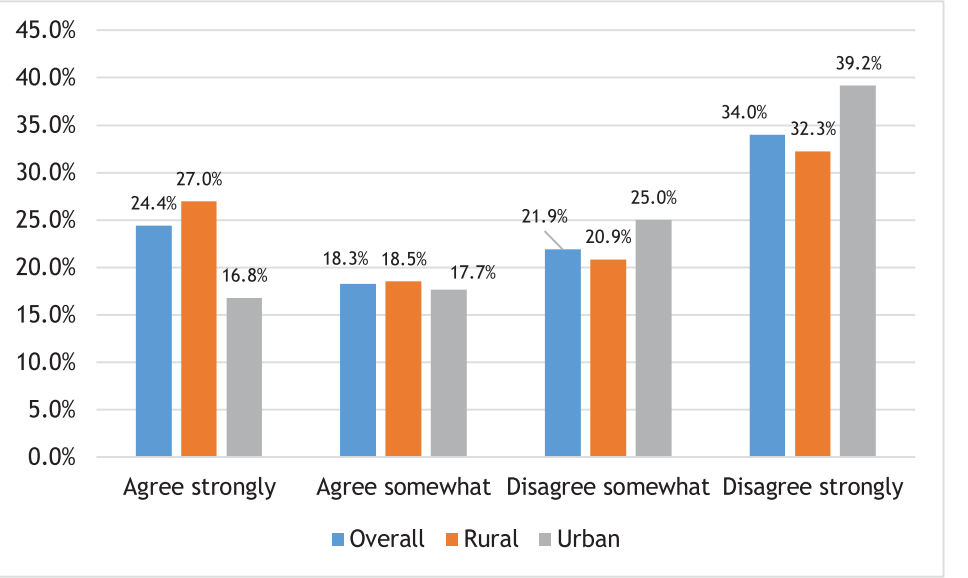



Figure 4.20: Opinion on the statement "Political parties in general care about people like you"

## 4.4. Political violence

In this section, the respondents were asked about the major causes of political violence in Bangladesh. The reasons reported can be grouped into two broad categories, one of them directly involves political reasons whereas the other includes mostly economic ones. The majority of the respondents (about 75%) viewed political reasons as the major causes of political violence. Political conflicts between parties and party factions were reported by as many as 62% of the respondents. Violence caused due to one-sided control over politics is reported by 8%. The percentage reporting *hartal* (general shutdown) as a cause is minimum due to the fact that *hartal* incidents have declined significantly since 2014. Among the other group, about 5% of the respondents mentioned *mastani*, another 5% cited the forceful occupation of property by party leaders, and 3% mentioned extortion as reasons behind political violence.

When asked about the second major reason for political violence, the responses aligned. About 15% of the respondents identified political conflicts, another 15% chose one-sided conflicts over politics, 12% noted *mastani*, and 11% viewed forceful occupancy of property by leaders as the second major cause of political violence.

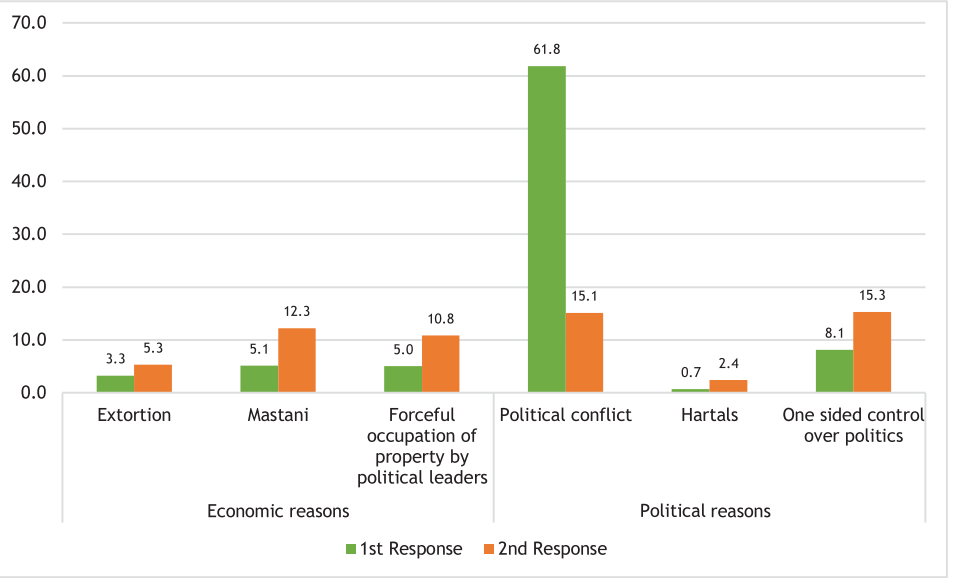



Figure 4.21: Conflicts related to politics

Apart from the political conflicts, there were some other categories which people thought perpetuate political conflicts. For example, 2% of the citizens think human rights violations is the first reason behind political violence, with an additional 4% voting it as the second major cause. Violence by state agencies was pointed out by 1% of the people as the first cause and 2% more choosing it as the second cause.

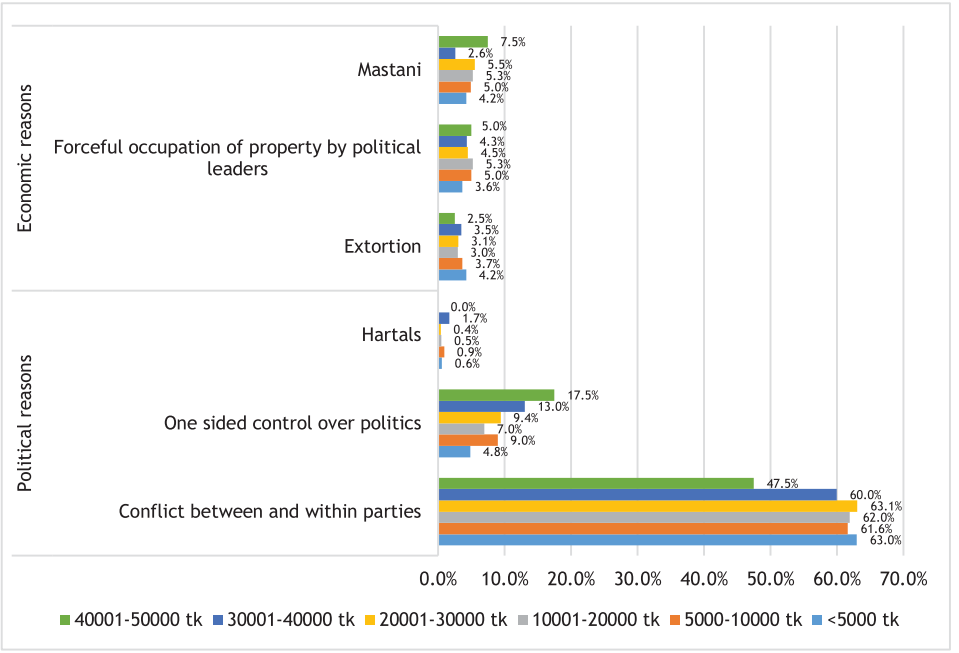



Figure 4.22: Political violence by income

Not much variation across locations, gender, or education is noticed (See Annex 4: Table 4.7). However, disaggregation by income shows that except for the higher income group, the other groups do not vary much while reporting the causes of violence. About 18% of the respondents belonging to the higher income group viewed one-sided control over politics as an important reason behind violence for which the percentage is as low as 5% among the lowest income group.

# 5. CITIZENSHIP

## 5.1. Living with dignity

In this section, the respondents were asked about the major three things they would need as Bangladeshi citizens to live with dignity. The responses came overwhelmingly in line

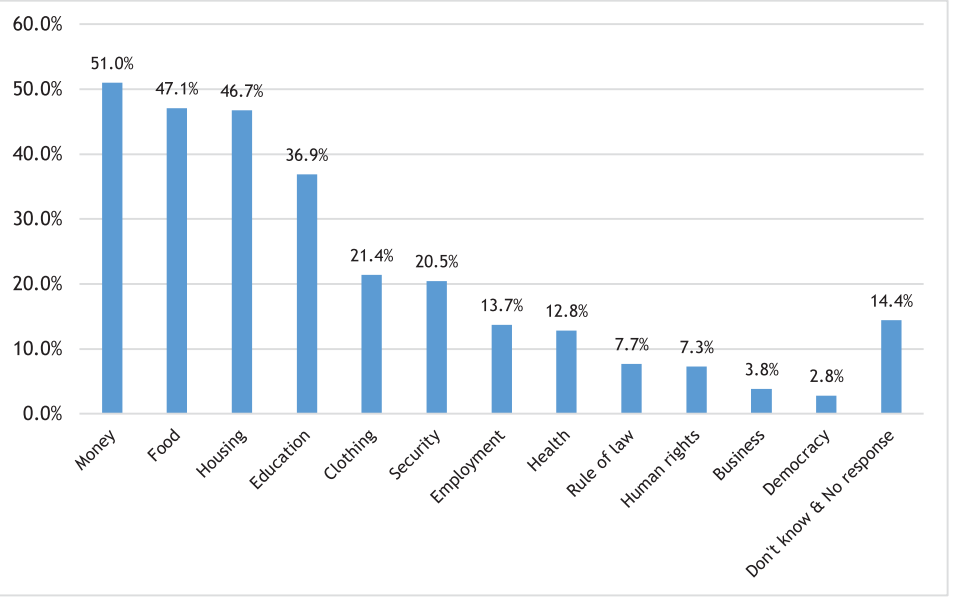



Figure 5.1: Major three things Bangladeshi citizens need to live with dignity

with the socio-economic needs of the citizens. About 51% of the respondents perceive money as the major factor which ensures a dignified life (Figure 5.1). People with income less than BDT 5,000 was the majority group who voted for money as a key factor behind leading a dignified life (Figure 5.2). A decreasing pattern is noticed here—as income increased, responses for money decreased, although such differences are not very significant. For the highest income group—people with BDT 40,001-50,000 income per household, the percentage was still 43% (Figure 5.2).

Then comes food with 47% of the respondents opting for it. Again, the responses varied widely across the income levels. The highest number of people choosing food as one of the major things for a dignified life came from the lowest income group—approximately 61%. For this particular income group, food is the first choice, with the second choice being money (56%). Housing was the third major thing chosen by about 47% of the respondents. Once again, most of the respondents opting for housing came from the

lowest income group. The responses varied significantly—30% of the people with BDT 40,001-50,000 monthly income chose housing, whereas the percentage almost doubled (58%) in case of people with less than BDT 5,000 monthly income. Education as a factor behind a dignified life received 37% of respondents' support and its preference increases with income. Only 17% of the people of the lowest income group opined that education seemed promising in ensuring a dignified life, whereas the percentage (opting for education) rises to 43% in case of the respondents from the highest income group. Interestingly, health lied much behind in this ranking, as only 13% of the respondents from the lowest income group marked this as important, and the highest percentage of people who shared the same view was from the highest income group—20%. About 21% of the people chose security as a key factor to ensure a dignified life, though the need for security is deemed much higher among the highest income categories (15% versus 38%). About 14% of the respondents also viewed employment as a major factor contributing to a dignified life; the middle-income groups, in particular, have reported this as an important concern compared to the other categories.

On the other hand, citizens' preference for democracy, rights, and rule of law seemed to be at the lower end. However, the income-wise disaggregation (Figure 5.2) shows that the percentages for these three go up along with income. About 20% of the respondents in the higher income group opted for human rights, followed by 13% for democracy, and another 13% for rule of law.

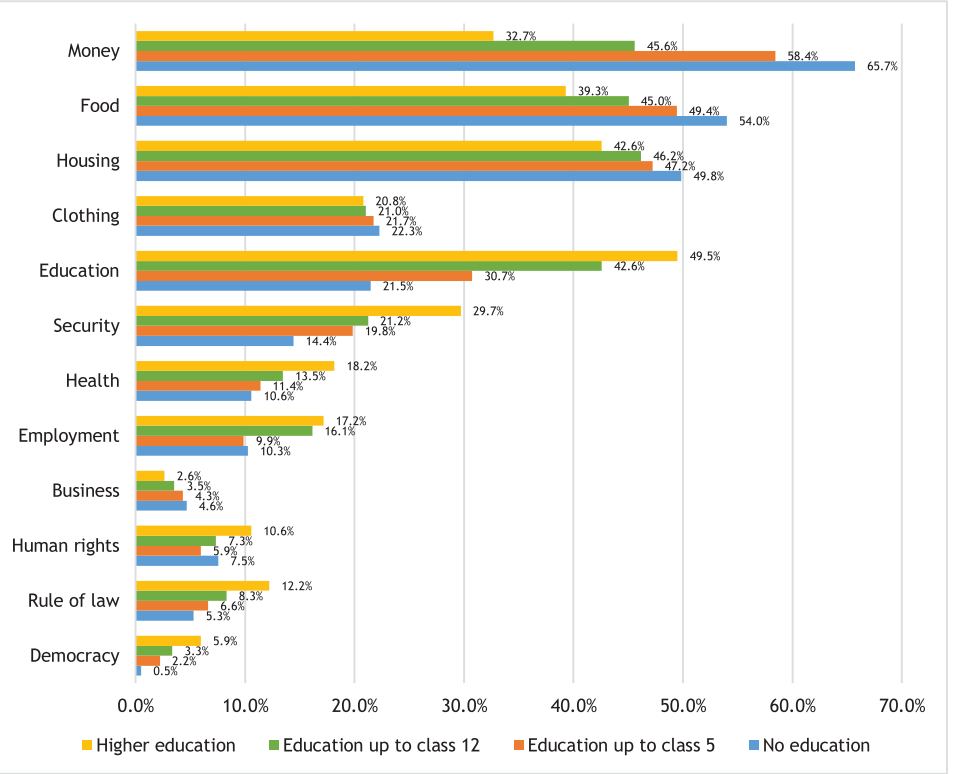



Figure 5.2: Major three things Bangladeshi citizens need to live with dignity (by income)

Responses disaggregated by education also show some patterns. Money (66%), food (54%), and housing (49.8%) as major three factors were chosen by people who have no education. The need for these three goes down with education increasing. On the other hand, education (50%), security (29%), health (18%), and employment (17%) were chosen mostly by the highly educated respondents.

No noticeable differences were found in the responses between men and women (Annex 5: Table 5.1).

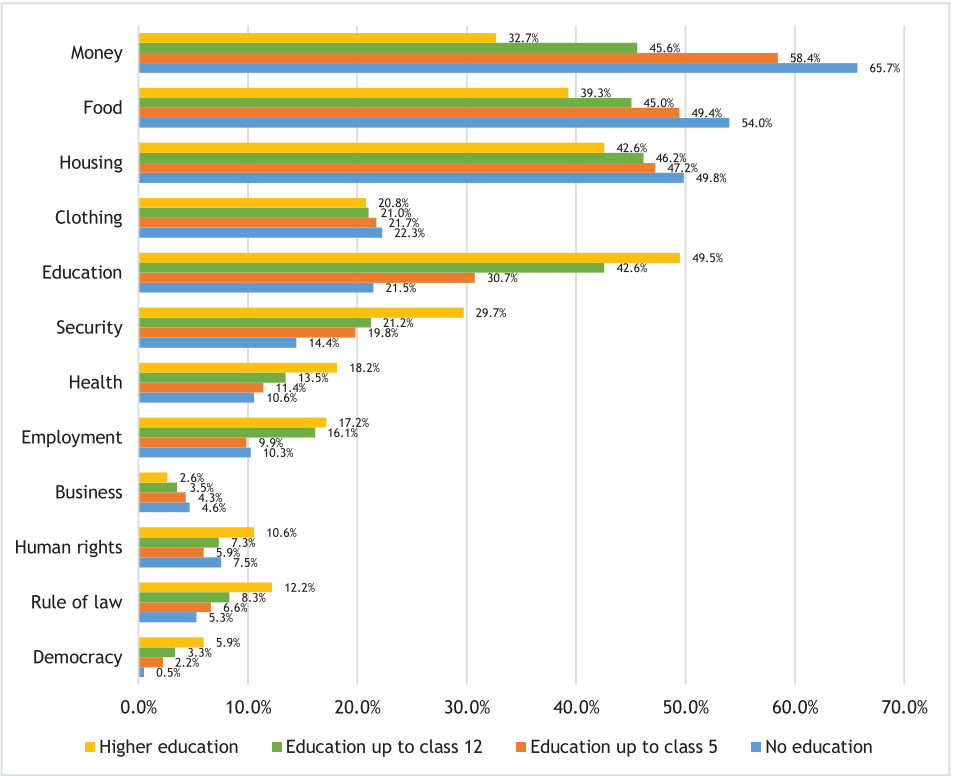



Figure 5.3: Major three things Bangladeshi citizens need to live with dignity (by education)

## 5.2. Freedom

In the next section, a similar question was asked—in order to live with freedom, what are the major things that you need?

About 67% of the respondents chose freedom of movement as the most important factor in order to ensure freedom. Public safety was supported by about 58% of the respondents. Among the ones who supported it, the majority were the ones with high income (73%) and high education (68%). The majority of the responses aligned with political and religious freedom and freedom of expression. About 67% of the respondents chose freedom of movement as the first thing that is required to live a free life.

The next major preference was freedom of expression. About 52% of the respondents chose freedom of expression as essential. Furthermore, to 13% of the people, a free life meant one in which one can practice his/her religion freely; and to 11%, it was a life with the freedom to participate in politics. In both of these cases, people with higher education was the majority group to choose these as the defining attributes of freedom.

Socio-economic needs tend to be deemed as some of the lowest scoring indicators to have a free life. Money scored the highest among these indicators with support from about 7% of the respondents. Public services (2%), education (1%), food, accommodation, and economic security were among the rest, falling below 2%.

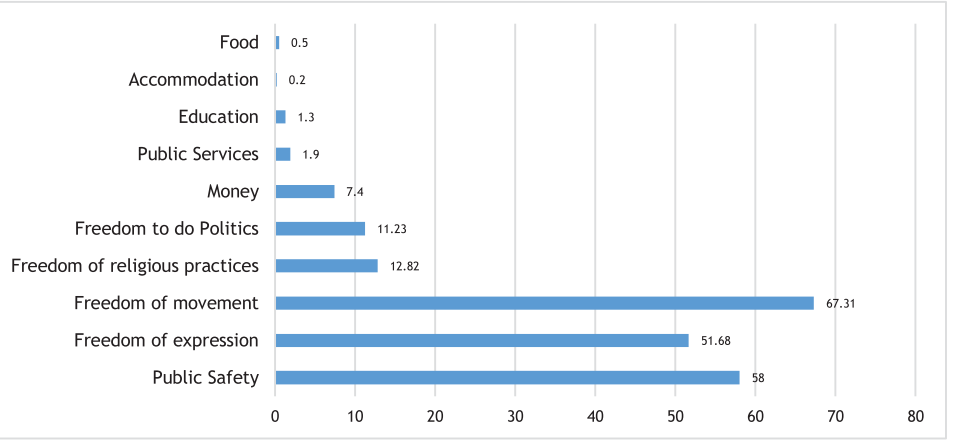



Figure 5.4: In order to live as a Bangladeshi citizen with freedom, what are the major things that citizens need?

The differences in respondents' educational categories reflect a similar trend (Figure 5.4). The support for freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom to do politics, and public safety go significantly up with increasing education, even though the difference between low and high education groups is not very pronounced regarding religious freedom. As seen, money was least reported by the highest education group. Income disaggregation is reported in Table 5.1. The support for religious freedom and money as a means to ensure freedom went down with increasing income. For other categories, namely the support for freedom of expression, public safety, and politics, went up with increasing income, while the support for freedom of movement did not vary much across the groups.

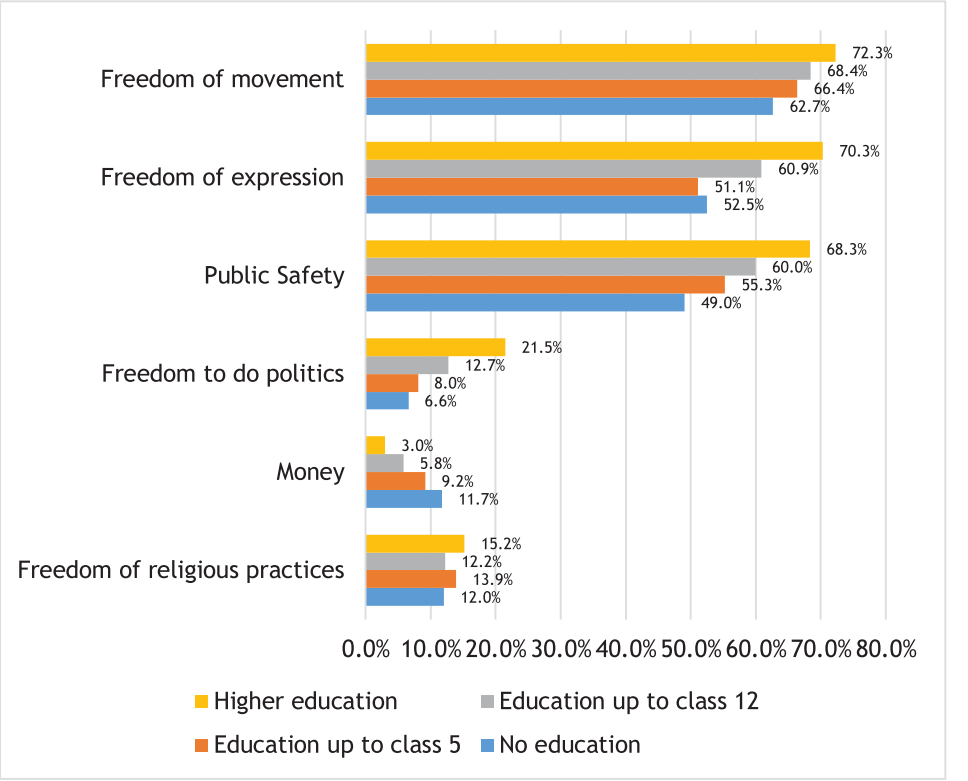



Figure 5.5: In order to live as a Bangladeshi citizen with freedom, what are the major things that citizens need? (by education)

| | <5,000 BDT | 5,000-10,000 BDT | 10,001-20,000 BDT | 20,001-30,000 BDT | 30,001-40,000 BDT | 40,001-50,000 BDT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Freedom of expression | 31.5% | 46.6% | 53.4% | 53.1% | 56.5% | 67.5% |
| Freedom of movement | 55.2% | 66.1% | 68.8% | 69.5% | 69.6% | 55.0% |
| Freedom to do politics | 6.1% | 10.1% | 11.1% | 14.3% | 17.4% | 22.5% |
| Freedom of religious practices | 13.3% | 12.7% | 13.2% | 1.7% | 13.0% | 7.5% |
| Public safety | 50.9% | 57.6% | 57.4% | 60.0% | 58.3% | 72.5% |
| Money | 18.2% | 6.5% | 6.6% | 9.6% | 7.0% | 2.5% |

Table 5.1: Freedom by income categories

## 5.3. Citizens' relationship with the government

This section deals with the topic of what citizens understand by the "government of the people." From the responses received, it appears that most see people's government as a benevolent one—which cares, honors, and listens to them. About 67% of the respondents said that a "government of the people" is the one that cares, with the majority responses coming from the lowest income group. Another 48% defined the government of the people as a "government who listens to ordinary people." About 25% of the respondents said that the people's government is one that provides assistance during personal distress. A government that honors people was also supported by 20% of the respondents as the definition of "government of the people." Responses segregated by gender groups did not show much variance.

It is interesting to note that democracy-related factors did not receive many responses. A "government controlled by democracy" was preferred as a factor by only 19% of the respondents. Similarly, a "government which promotes political freedom" only received about 6% support, while "elected by the democracy" received about 3% support.

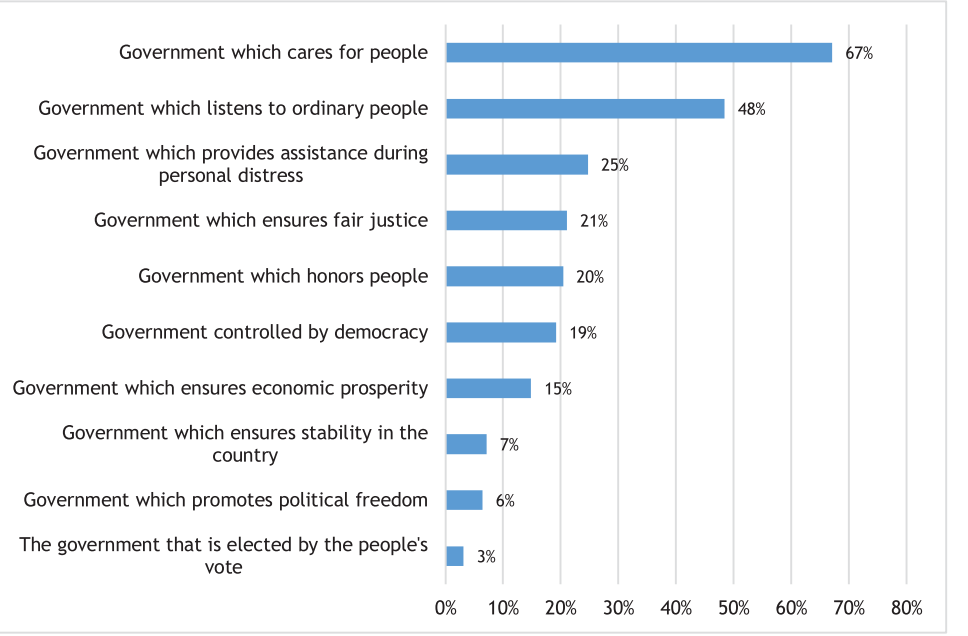



Figure 5.6: What do you understand by "government of the people?"

Among other criteria explaining "government of the people," approximately 15% of the citizens opted for a "government which ensures economic prosperity" and 7% preferred a "government which ensures political stability." Justice as the criterion of "government of the people" received 21% responses.

The next question aimed to understand how citizens perceive their relationship with their government. About 31% of the citizens responded that they see the government as their representative. As education and income level increase, the responses increase by about 10% for both the groups (Annexe 5: Table 5.3). It should be Not much variation is noticed when disaggregated by gender.

Almost 26% of the respondents perceived the government as their patron. Another 27% deemed it as their protector and service provider. Moreover, 8% of citizens saw their relationship with the government as the one between a king and his subjects, although only 6% of the highly educated people voted for this category (Annexe 5: Table 5.3). In all of these cases, the responses do not vary much across the groups.

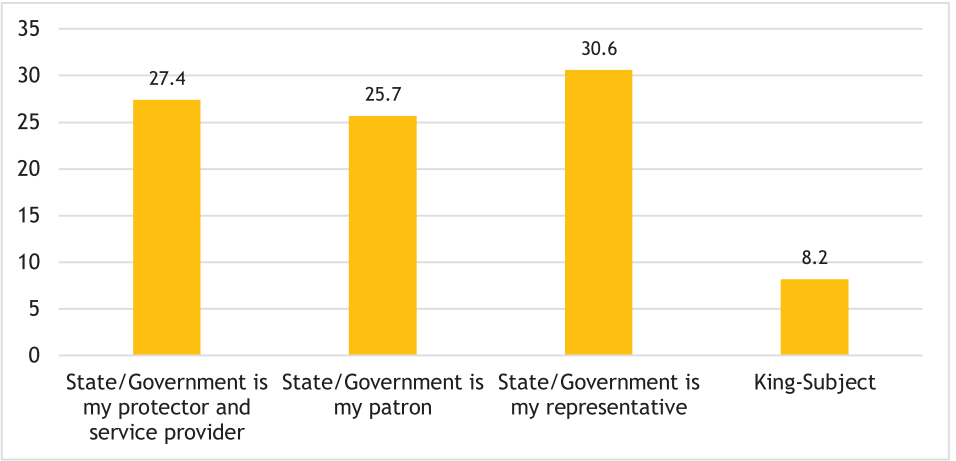



Figure 5.7: Relationship with the government/state

# 6. DEMOCRACY IN BANGLADESH

## 6.1. Understanding of democracy in Bangladesh

Democracy is perhaps the simplest yet most powerful term in the history of politics. Many attempts have been made to clarify the concept using theories and also by taking people's opinions. For decades, surveys in Bangladesh have been exploring how Bangladeshi people internalize the concept of democracy and how they associate it with elements of their own context.

In this survey, a question was included about democracy to understand how citizens perceive a state when it is democratic. The options were given even though it was strictly instructed not to read out the options. The survey allowed a maximum of three definitions of democracy from one respondent.

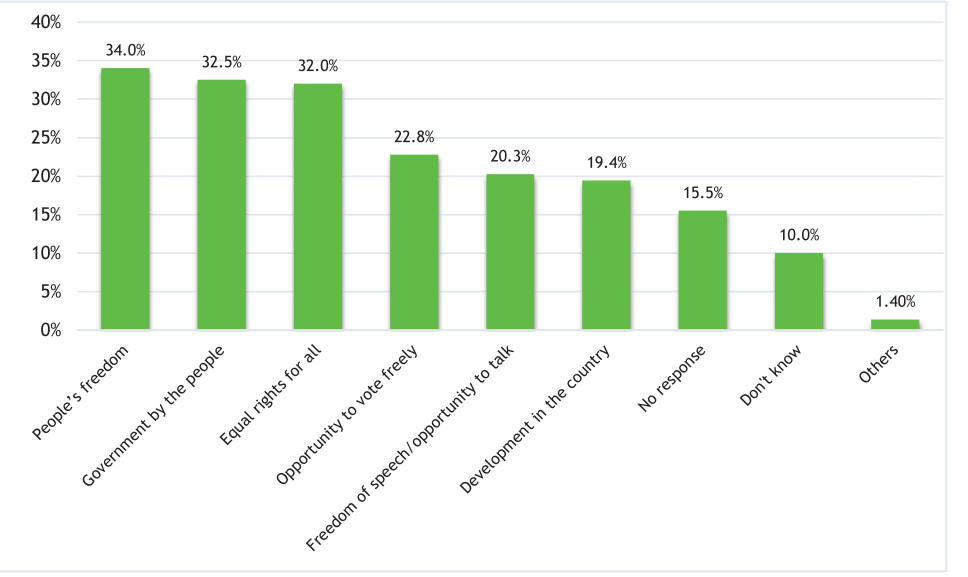



Figure 6.1: When a country is called democratic, what do citizens understand by that?

The responses received are quite diverse (Figure 6.1). The single largest group of 34% of the respondents viewed democracy as people's freedom, followed by another 33% who chose the classic definition of democracy that it is a government by the people. Around 32% stated that democracy is about ensuring equal rights to all followed by approximately

23% who understood democracy as an opportunity to vote freely. Around 20% viewed democracy as freedom of expression and 19% believed that democracy is about the development. It is also noteworthy that more than one-fourth of the respondents couldn't either express their understanding in words or didn't want to respond (10% &. 16%). If compared to the responses of the same survey conducted in 2017 and 2018 (Figure 6.2), it is evident that the perception about democracy as an opportunity to vote freely decreased this year, which can be a reflection of voting experience people had in the last national election. When disaggregated by location, no significant difference between rural and urban respondents are found, even though the share of "no response" and "don't know" are slightly higher in rural areas (Annexe Table 6.1). When disaggregated by gender, it can be seen that the share of "no response" and "don't know" are significantly high among females compared to their male counterpart.

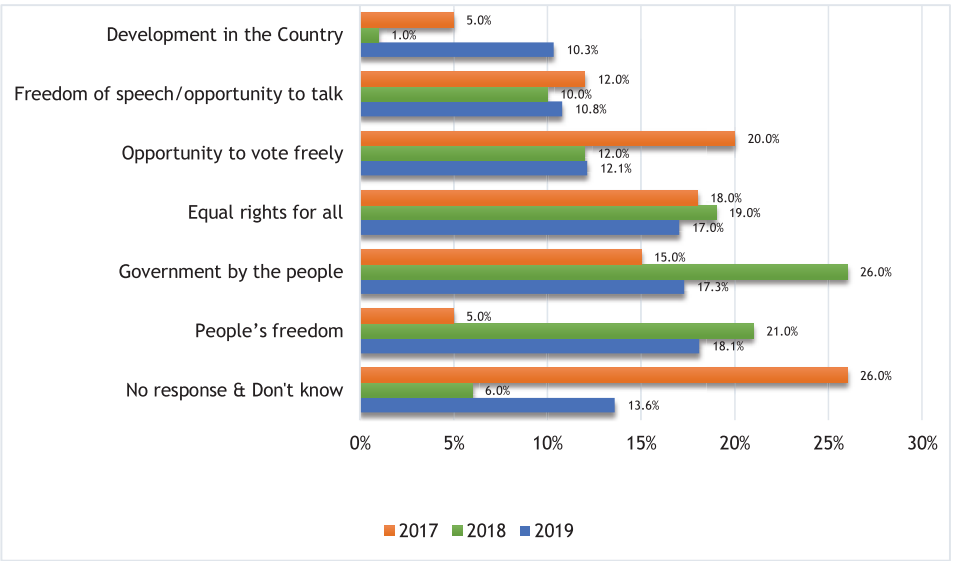



Figure 6.2: When a country is called democratic, what do people understand by that? (by year)

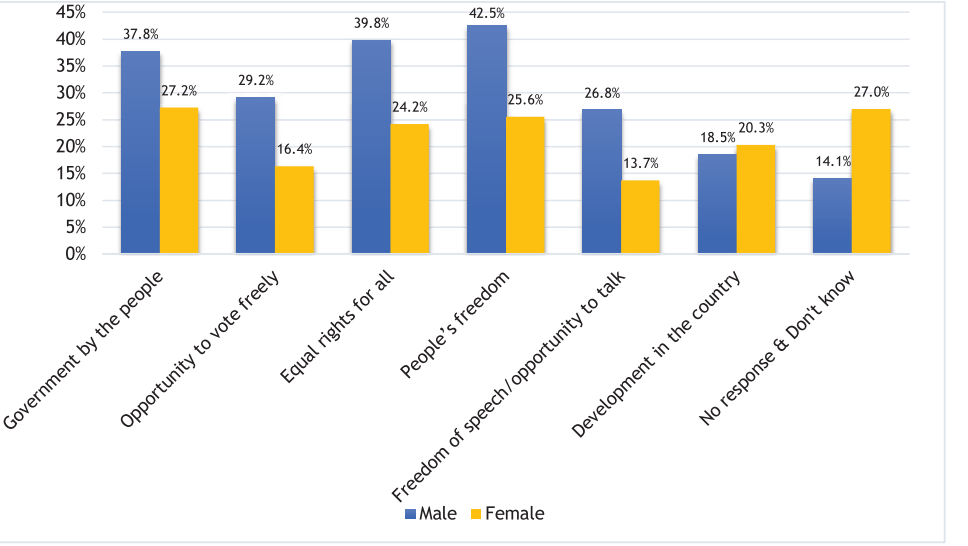



Figure 6.3: When a country is called democratic, what do people understand by that? (by gender)

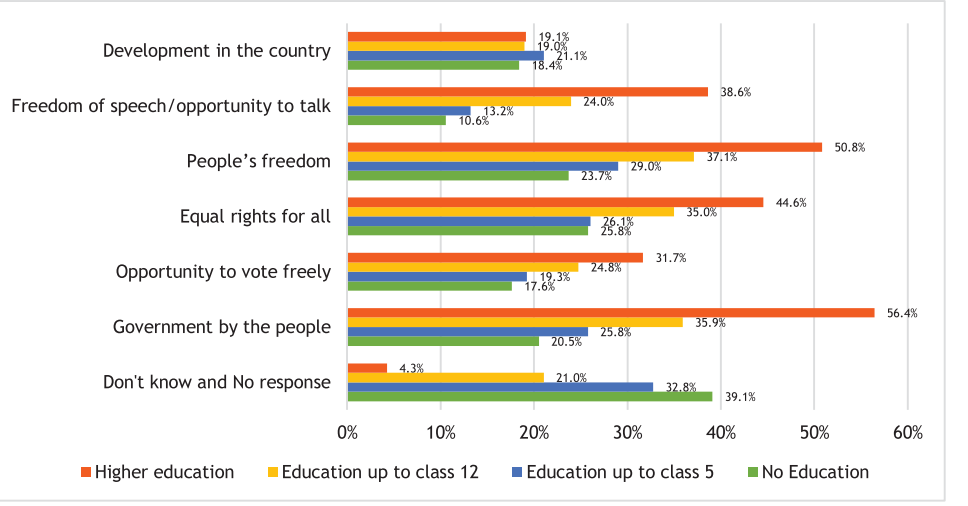



Figure 6.4: When a country is called democratic, what do people understand by that? (by education groups)

It is interesting to look at the responses by education categories (Figure 6.4). The majority of the respondents in the higher education category, i.e. with bachelors and above, preferred to describe democracy as a government by the people. About 56% of the higher educated group supported that view in contrast to 20% of no education group. The responses regarding other definitions of democracy such as people's freedom, the freedom of expression, equal rights for all, and opportunity to vote increase with education. Interestingly, democracy as development received similar support from all education categories. It is also visible that the understanding of democracy improves with education as the percentage share of "don't know" responses and "no response" decrease.

The responses slightly vary if disaggregated by income (Figure 6.5). The number of responses for each option increases with income. People's freedom and freedom of speech (55% and 50%) were the most preferred responses for the highest income group. The pattern remained the same for the second-highest income group. The responses from middle income categories, on the other hand, did not vary much. On the contrary, 40% of the lowest income category chose "don't know." Among the rest of the 60%, 25% picked equal rights for people and another 25% chose government by the people as the definition of democracy.

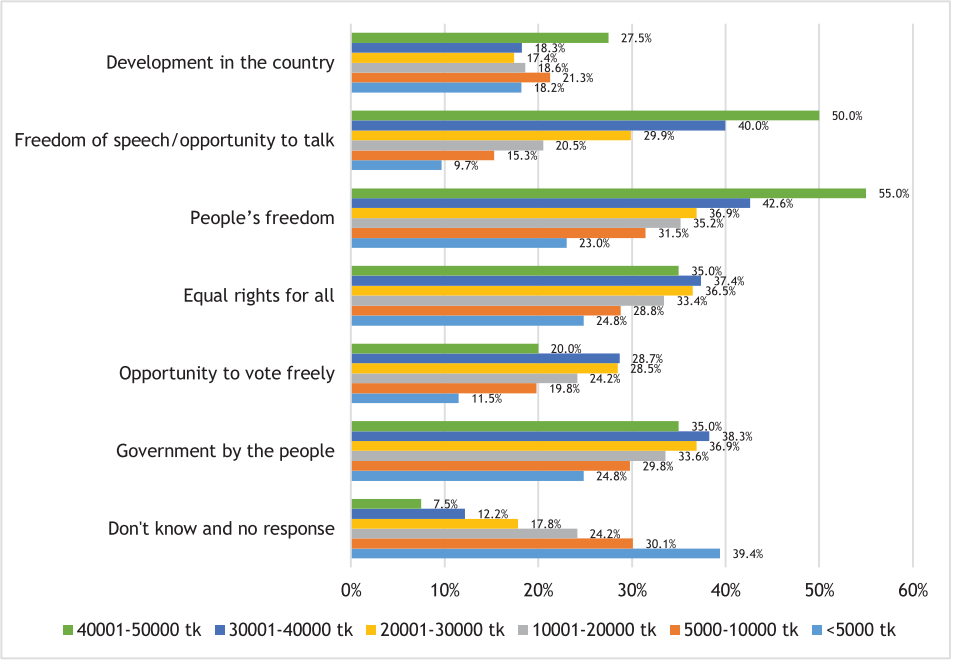



Figure 6.5. When a country is called democratic, what do people understand by that? (by income groups)

## 6.2. Election and voting behavior

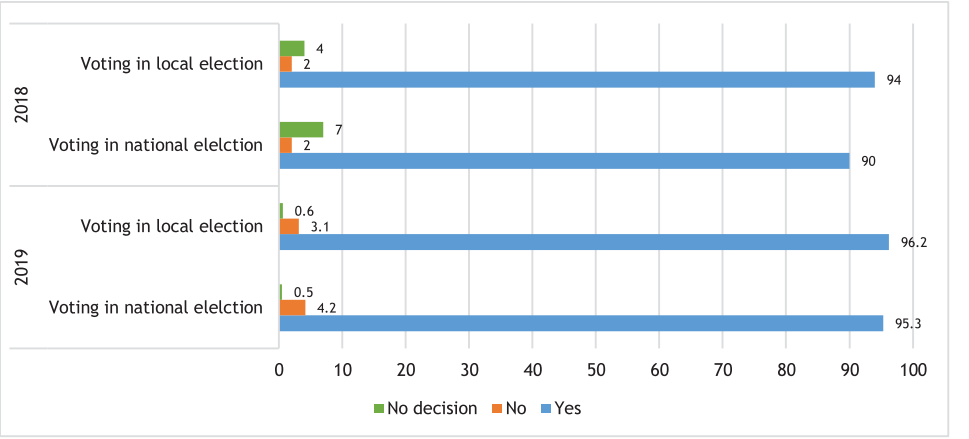



Figure 6.6: Do you vote or plan to vote in elections?

When asked if people voted or decided to vote in both national and local elections, the survey reported that the overwhelming majority either voted or plan to vote in elections (Figure 6.6). The responses are also quite similar to last year's responses, even though the percentage of indecision has slightly reduced this year. The positive responses regarding local elections are found to be slightly higher. The participation-related decisions are quite similar in urban and rural areas regarding national election even though local election participation rates were a bit higher in rural regions than in urban (Figure 6.7). The participation decision did not vary by gender (Annexe 6: Table 6.2).

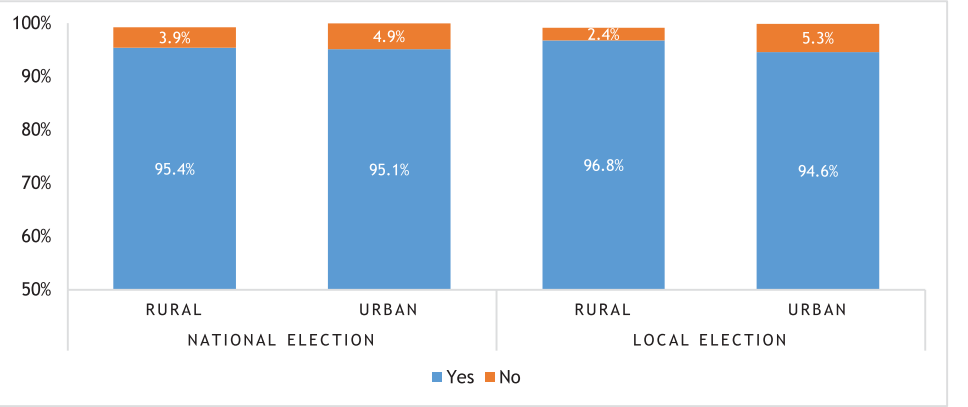



Figure 6.7: Do you vote or plan to vote in elections? (by location)

The disaggregation by education and income show some interesting patterns (Figure 6.8 & 6.9). Generally, election participation and decision regarding voting decrease with income and education. As Figure 6.8 shows, the group with little education seems more enthusiastic in voting compared to other groups. It should also be noted that the highest income groups were slightly more interested in participating in national elections than local elections (93% vs 90%), whereas all other groups were keener in taking part in local elections (Figure 6.9).

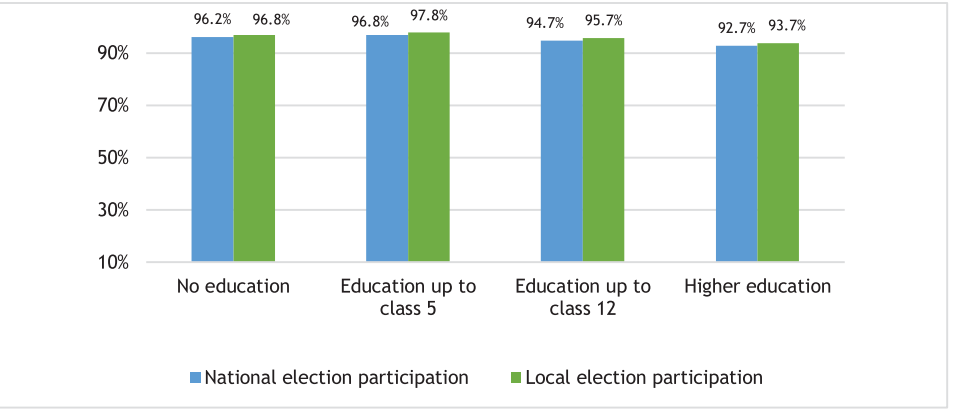



Figure 6.8: Those who vote or want to vote (by education)

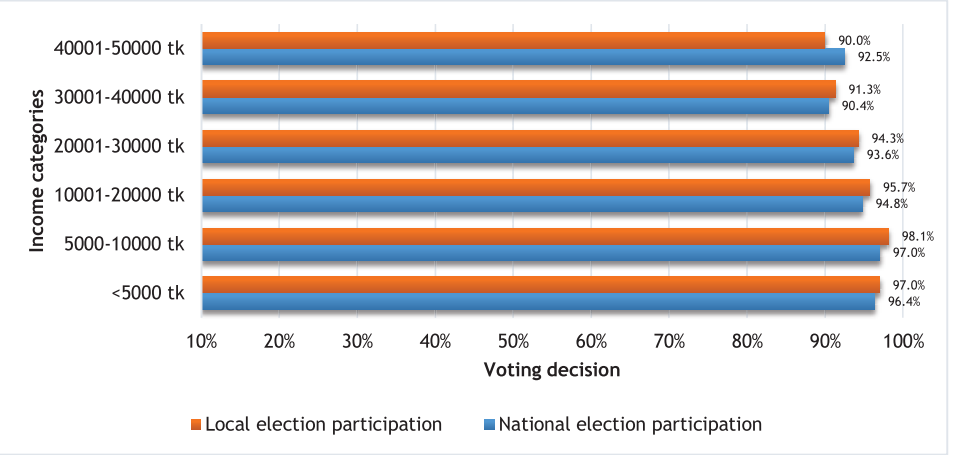



Figure 6.9: Those who vote or want to vote (by income)

## 6.3 Democratic practices in Bangladesh

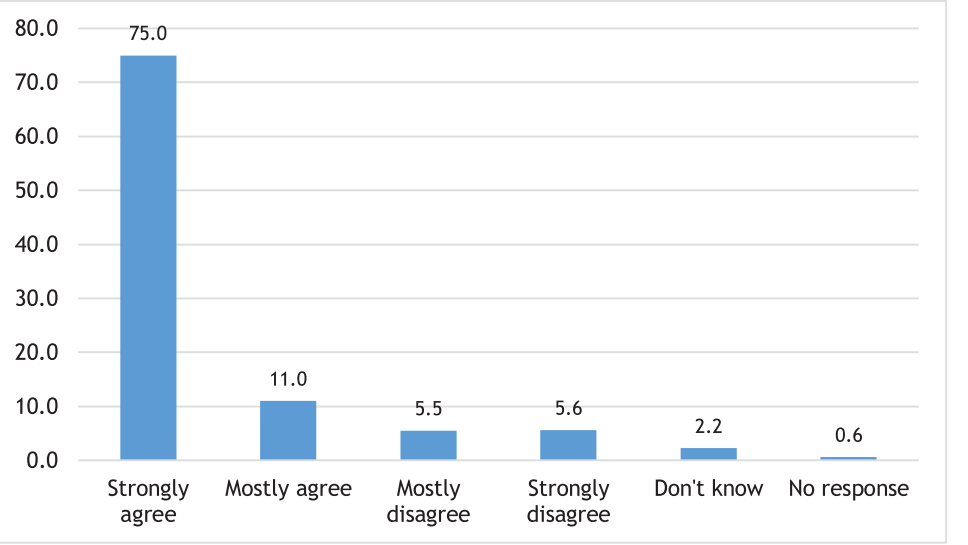



Figure 6.10: Thoughts on the statement that "at present, one party plays a dominant role in politics/governance"

When asked to what extent the respondents agree with the statement that "at present, one party plays a dominant role in politics/governance" in Bangladesh, the survey found that the overwhelming majority of the people (approximately 86%) agreed with this statement (Figure 6.10). Among them, 75% agreed strongly and 11% agreed mostly. On the other hand, 6% mostly disagreed while another 6% of the respondents expressed strong disagreement. No significant variations on agreement by location or gender were found by combining strongly agree and mostly agree, but it appears that male respondents and those living in urban areas were inclined to express their opinion more strongly compared to their female and rural-living counterparts (Figure 6.11 & Figure 6.12). When disaggregated by income and education, no pronounced difference among the respondents was found.

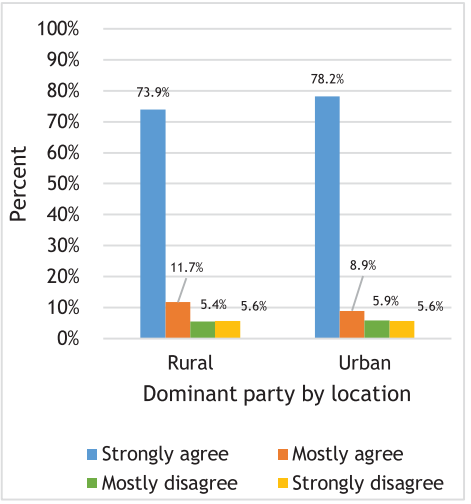



Figure 6.11: Thoughts on the statement that "at present, one party plays a dominant role in politics/governance" (by location)

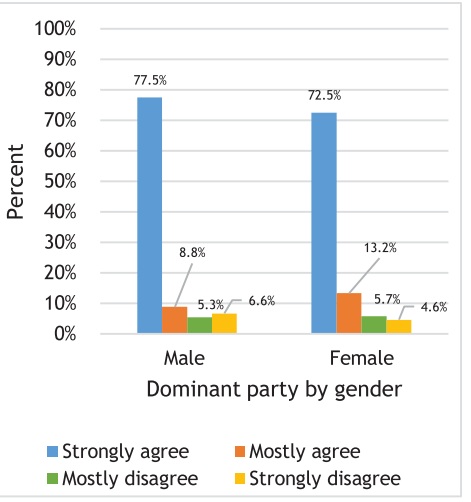



Figure 6.12: Thoughts on the statement that "at present, one party plays a dominant role in politics/governance" (by gender)

The disaggregated responses by education and income groups are shown below (Figure 6.13 & 6.14). Even though the total percentage of agreement did not vary much, respondents with the highest education tended to express their opinions more strongly than other groups. Same goes for income disaggregated responses. A higher percentage of respondents belonging to the two highest income brackets chose "strongly agree" compared to respondents belonging to other income cohorts.

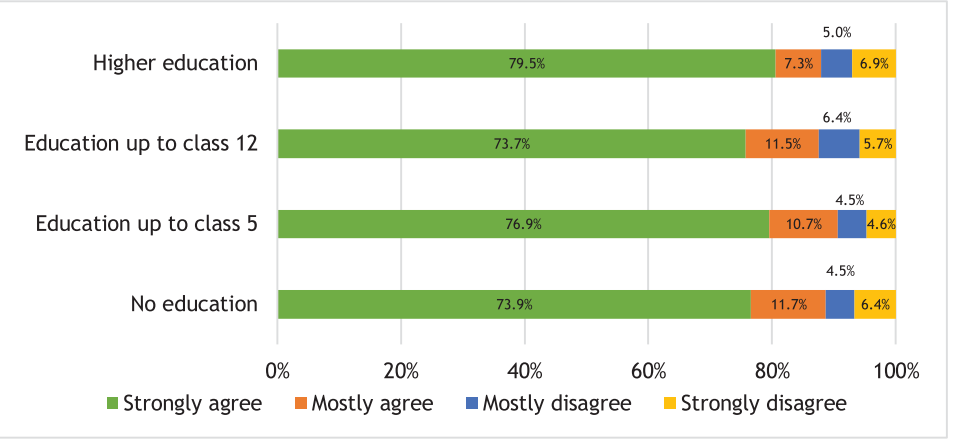



Figure 6.13: Agreement on the statement that "at present, one party plays a dominant role in politics/ governance" (by education)

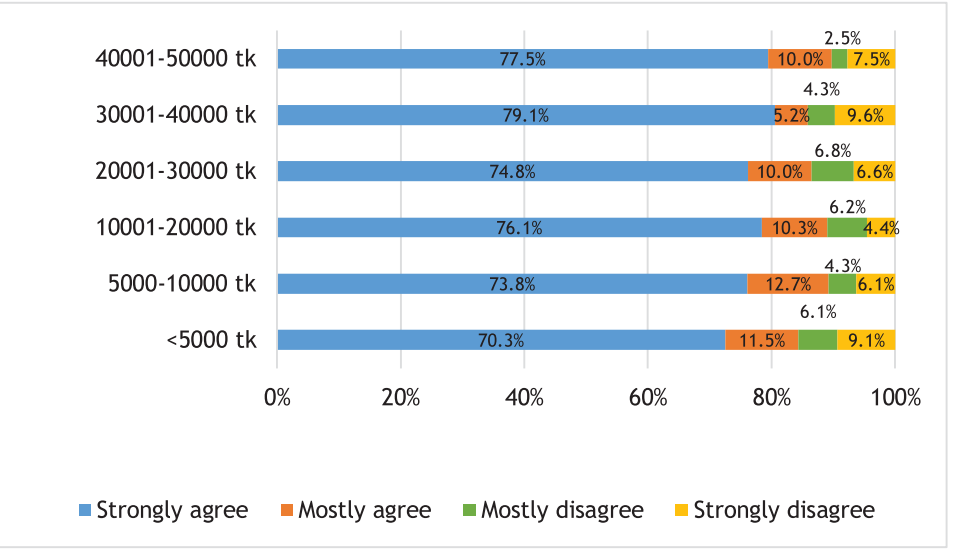



Figure 6.14: Agreement on the statement that "at present, one party plays a dominant role in politics/ governance" (by location)

## Impact of the dominant party system

Those who fully or partially agreed with the statement that there is a dominant party system (whereby one party plays a dominant role in the political process) prevailing in the country were asked to assess the impact of the dominant party in four different areas including politics, governance, society, and economic transactions. The majority (two-thirds combining

fully and mostly agree) believed that the impact of the dominant party system is generally positive on society, politics, governance, and economic transactions (Figure 6.15). However, among all four categories, people tended to also believe that the negative impact would be highest on politics and economic transactions compared to the rest. It is also noteworthy that on average at least one-third of the respondents viewed the impacts on all four aspects as mostly or fully negative.

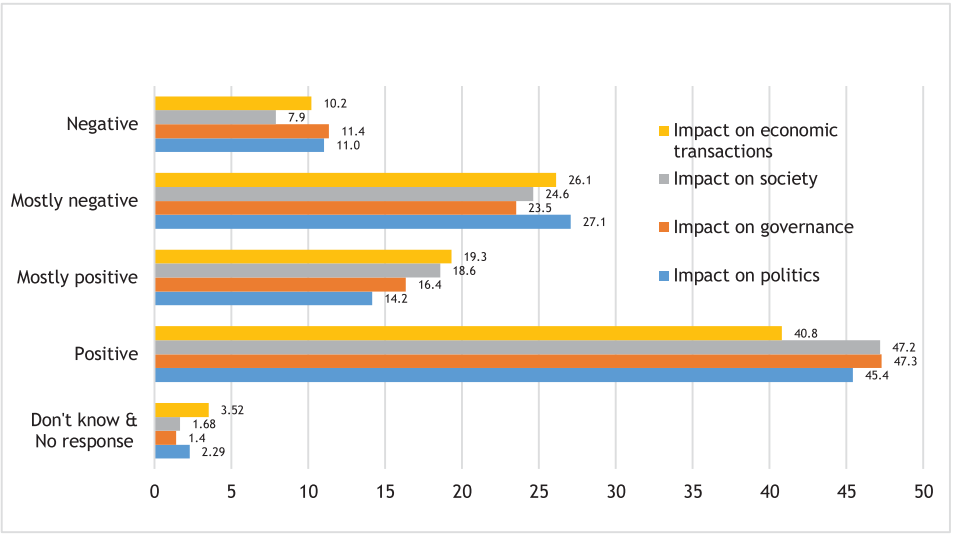



Figure 6.15: Impact of a dominant party system

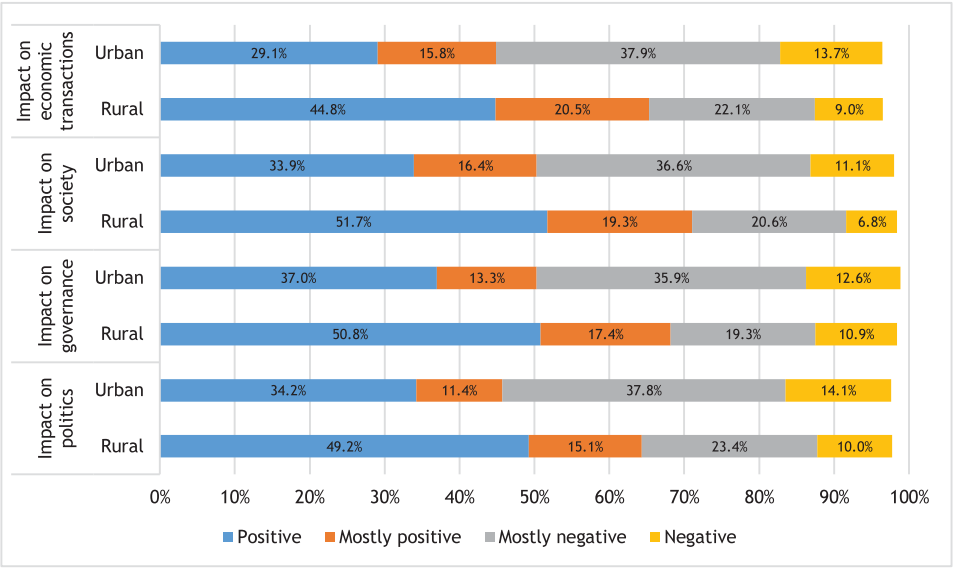



Figure 6.16: Impact on governance (by location)

The variation in responses by location is interesting (Figure 6.16). In all the four aspects, respondents located in urban areas were found more concerned about the impact of a dominant party system in politics, governance, society, and economic transactions. As seen, 52% of the respondents in urban areas think that the impact of a dominant party system would be mostly or fully negative in politics compared to their rural counterpart (33%). Similarly, in contrast to 30% of the rural respondents, around 48% of the urban respondents hold the belief that the impact on governance would be negative. Another 48% of the urban people think that the impact on society would be negative compared to 27% of the rural respondents who share the same view. The percentages for economic transaction are 52% in urban areas against 29% in rural. However, the responses across gender do not show any significant variation.

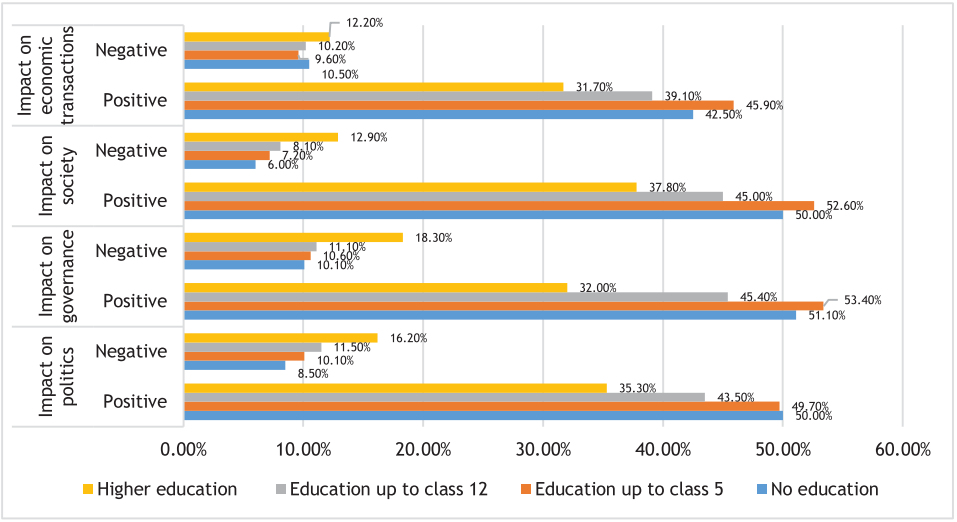



Figure 6.17: Impact on governance (by education)

The same pattern is reflected when the data is disaggregated by education (Figure 6.17). The trend shows that with more education, respondents tended to choose more negative ratings regarding the impact of a dominant party in politics, governance, society, and economic transactions. Most of the respondents belonging to the highly educated group held a view that politics is likely to be negatively impacted followed by governance and economic transactions. For a detailed table, please refer to Annexe 6: Table 6.3.

The responses remained similar across the board when they are segregated by income groups. The responses are quite reciprocal and the perceived positive impact for all four indicators went down with higher income groups whereas the negative responses went up (see Annexe 6: Table 6.4).

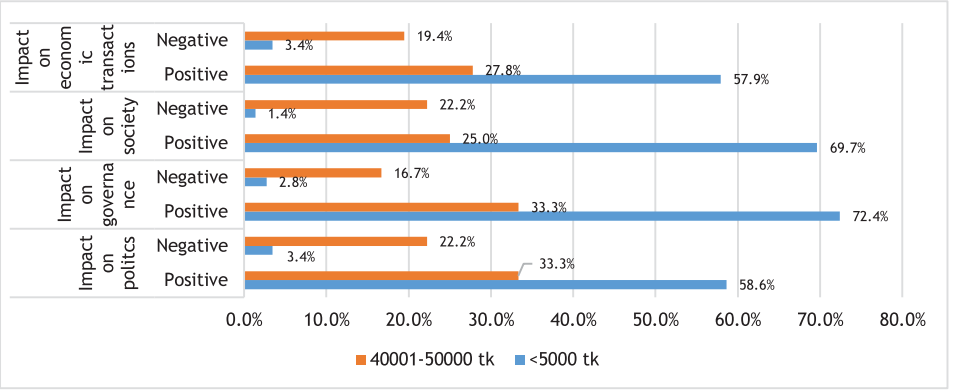



Figure 6.18: Impact on governance (by highest and lowest income groups)

## 6.4 Discussing and expressing political views

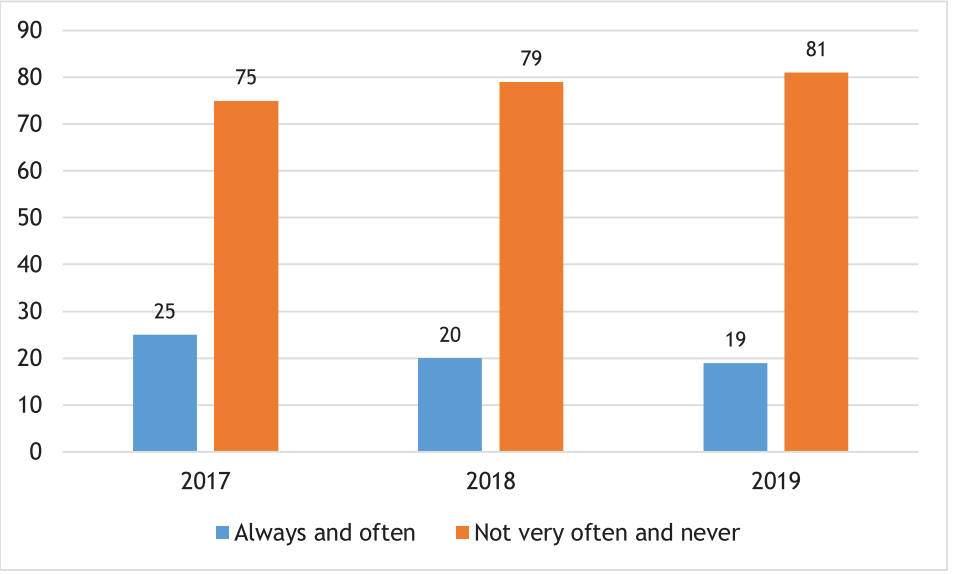



Figure 6.19: How often do you discuss politics with friends?

Discussing politics with friends does not seem to be very popular among the respondents. As seen in Figure 6.19, the percentages of respondents who reportedly discussed politics often and always have decreased over the years. Majority of the respondents (57%) said that they never or almost never discuss politics with friends. Another 23% reported that they discuss politics with friends occasionally. On the contrary, 19% said that they discuss

politics often followed by a mere 3% who reported to discuss politics regularly. Discussing politics is even less common among females (Figure 6.20). Only 10% of the female respondents often or most of the time discuss politics, which is less than half of the male respondents in these two categories.

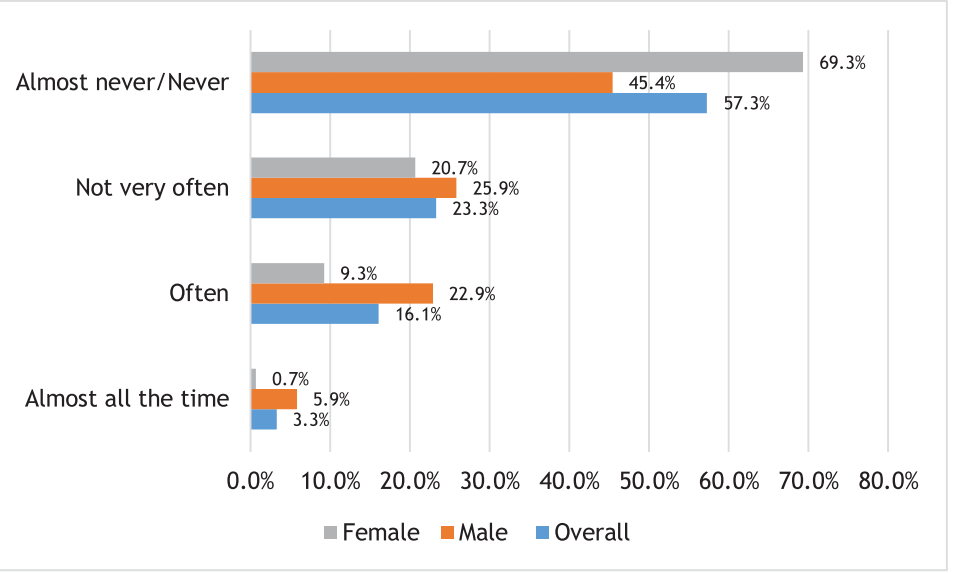



Figure 6.20: How often do you discuss politics with friends? (overall and by gender)

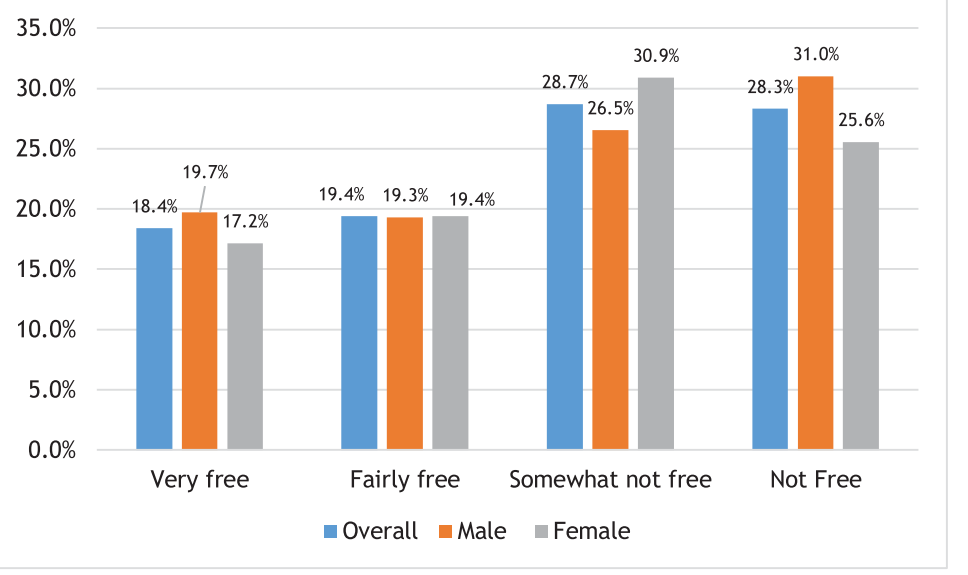



Figure 6.21: To what extent do the people of your locality feel free in expressing their political opinions? (overall and by gender)

Another question inquired was "to what extent do the people of your locality feel free in expressing their political opinions?" Figure 6.21 shows that the majority of the respondents (57%) felt that people in their area are not at all or not much free to express their opinions regarding political matters. About 19% of them perceived that people are fairly free and 18% thought that local people are very free to express their political opinions.

For both questions, the differences were not very pronounced among the rural and urban respondents (Figure 6.22).

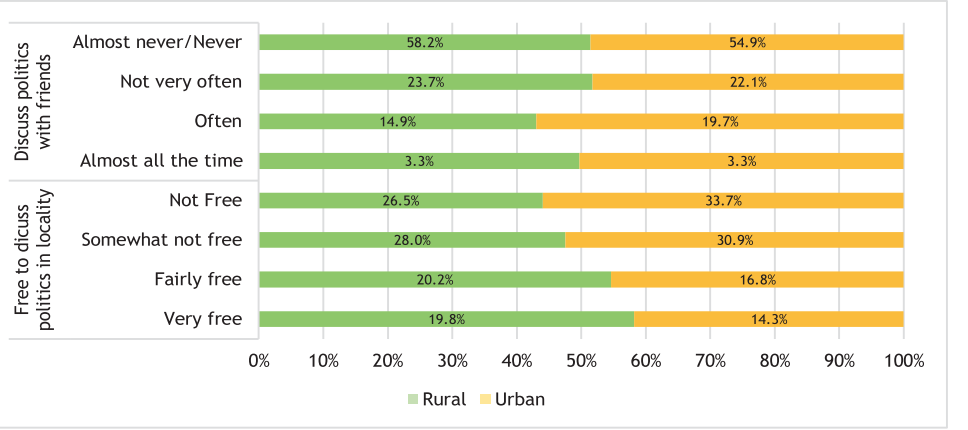



Figure 6.22: Discussing politics and perception regarding local people's freedom in expressing political views (by location)

| | | No education | Education up to class 5 | Education up to class 12 | Higher education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Discussing politics with friends** | Almost all the time | 1.6% | 3.0% | 3.7% | 5.3% |
| | Often | 11.4% | 13.0% | 18.5% | 19.5% |
| | Not very often | 17.9% | 21.1% | 24.2% | 35.0% |
| | Almost never/never | 69.1% | 62.9% | 53.6% | 40.3% |
| **Perception on freedom of local people to discuss politics** | Very free | 18.4% | 19.0% | 18.6% | 15.5% |
| | Fairly free | 16.5% | 19.6% | 20.6% | 15.8% |
| | Somewhat not free | 28.0% | 26.8% | 29.7% | 29.4% |
| | Not free | 28.5% | 28.0% | 27.1% | 37.3% |

Table 6.1: Discussing politics with friends and perception regarding local people freely expressing their political views (by education)

It is important to look at these by educational cross-sections (Table 6.1). When asked if the respondents discuss politics with friends, it was found that discussing politics with friends is, as expected, reportedly higher among the higher educated groups. As seen, 69% of the lowest education group said that they do not discuss politics which may reflect on their lack of interest or lack of information in this subject. But what is surprising is that the political discussion is not reported by many respondents even in the higher educational groups. For instance, about 40% of the respondents with bachelors and above reported that they do not discuss politics with friends—if never and not very often are combined, this becomes as high as 75%. In case they are underreporting, this result can be checked with the responses of the second question which asked people about their perceptions regarding freedom of expression of local people. About 67% of the respondents in the higher educated group said that people are somewhat not free or not at all free to discuss politics. The responses by income group also show that people with higher income discuss politics more often compared to their poorest counterpart. At the same time, even though they discuss politics more, respondents belonging to higher income group believed that people are not fully free or entirely free to express their opinions (Annex 6: Table 6.5)

## 6.5. Deliberative democracy and rural justice forums: Awareness and effectiveness in Bangladesh

The objective of this set of questions is to assess the awareness and effectiveness of the local government forums in Bangladesh. These were only asked in rural areas, i.e. to 3,072 respondents.

Knowledge about Ward Sabha and Open Budget Meetings (OBMs) were explored. The findings, as reported in Figure 6.23, suggest that only 34% of the respondents knew about Ward Sabha and a mere 16% had information about OBMs. A supplementary set of questions were asked to assess their knowledge of where these meetings took place. Around 86% of the respondents who said they heard or knew about Ward Sabha were right about the meeting places of Ward Sabha. The percentages slightly went down to 77% for OBMs. Female respondents were found less aware of these two forums (20% and 12%) compared to their male counterpart. Among the male respondents, 90% and 80% could correctly mention where the meetings take place. The percentages are 81% and 70% for female respondents.

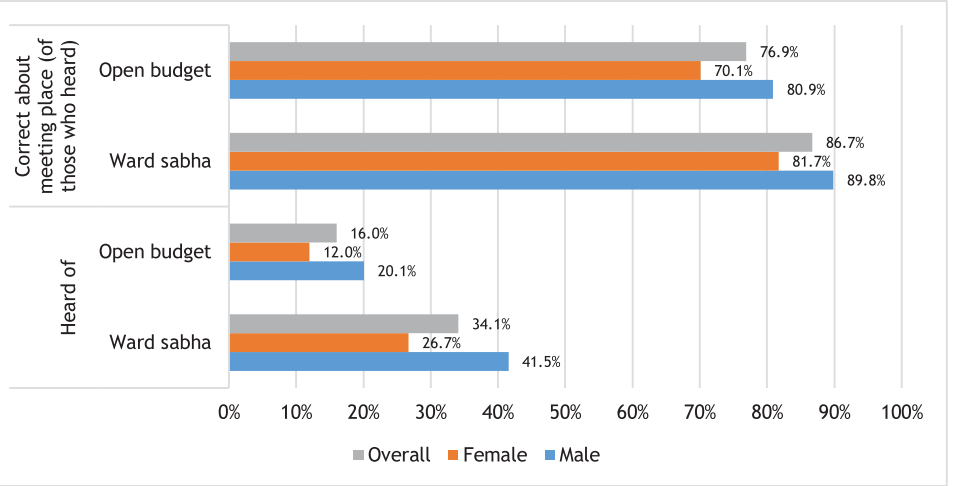



Figure 6.23: Knowledge about Ward Sabha and open budget forums

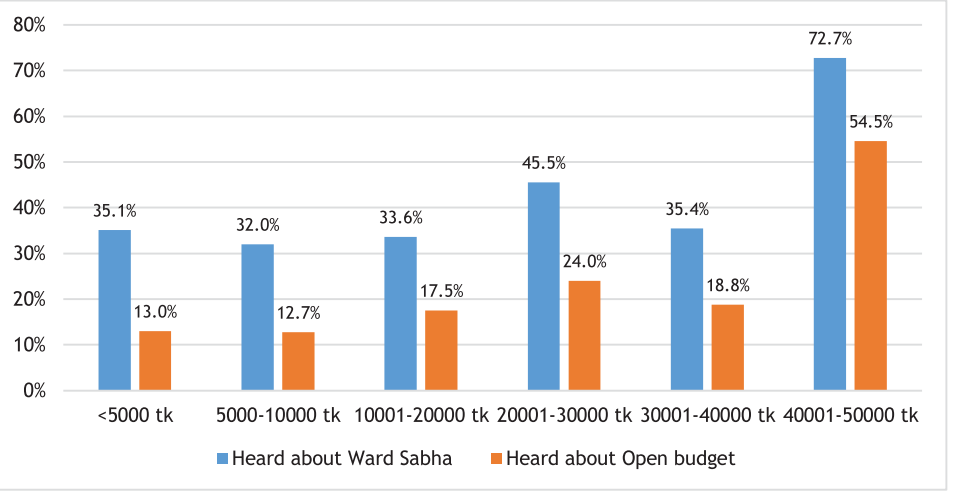



Figure 6.24: Knowledge about Ward Sabha and open budget forums (by income)

Interestingly, the information about Ward Sabha and OBMs are positively associated with income level. More than 70% of the highest income group said that they knew about Ward Sabha compared to 33% of the lowest income category (Figure 6.24). This certainly raises concerns about whether these forums are being truly representative of all social classes. A similar trend was again visible when the survey inquired them about OBMs. The knowledge regarding OBMs also increases with educational attainment, the percentages are almost four times higher in the highest education cohort compared to the lowest one (Table 6.2).

| | No education | Education up to class 5 | Education up to class 12 | Higher education |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Heard about Ward Sabha** | 24.9% | 31.1% | 38.2% | 38.5% |
| **Heard about Open budget** | 8.6% | 10.2% | 19.6% | 32.4% |

Table 6.2: Knowledge about Ward Sabha and open budget forums (by education)

## Social safety net

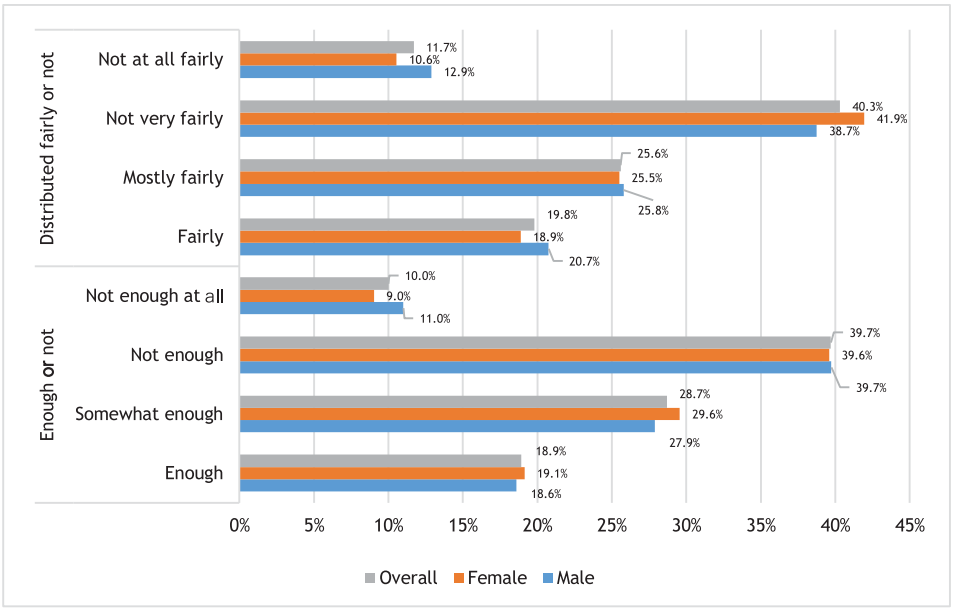



Figure 6.25: Perceptions regarding the sufficiency and distribution of social safety nets

When asked about the information regarding the different social safety net programs provided by the local government, an overwhelming 99% of the respondents stated that they are aware of the programs. When asked if the programs are sufficient or not, the majority (approximately 50%) replied that the programs are not enough to cater to their needs (Figure 6.25). Around 19% viewed them as just enough whereas another 29% thought these are somewhat enough to fulfil the need of the local people. When asked if the safety nets are distributed fairly, again 52% thought that these are not distributed very fairly or at all fairly. The responses did not vary much by gender. Interestingly, the higher income group believed that the social safety net benefits are distributed fairly (combining the very fairly or somewhat fairly) compared to the lower income group (Figure 6.26). It is to be noted that for higher income groups, the responses are most likely to reflect their perceptions regarding the distribution while the responses from the low-income groups are most likely formed from their experience. The responses also differ slightly by education groups, though the difference is not very pronounced (Refer to Annexure Table 6.6).

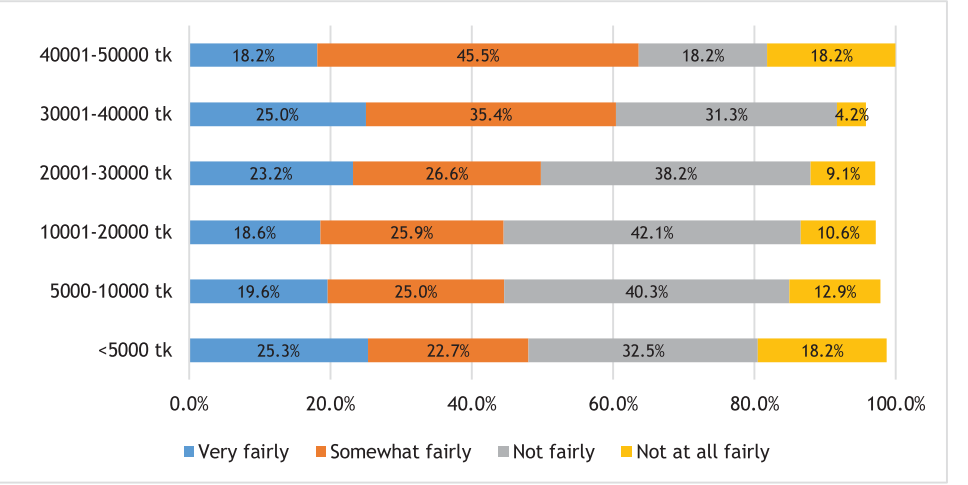



Figure 6.26: Perceptions regarding the sufficiency and distribution of social safety nets (by income groups)

## Awareness and effectiveness of the forums for dispute resolution

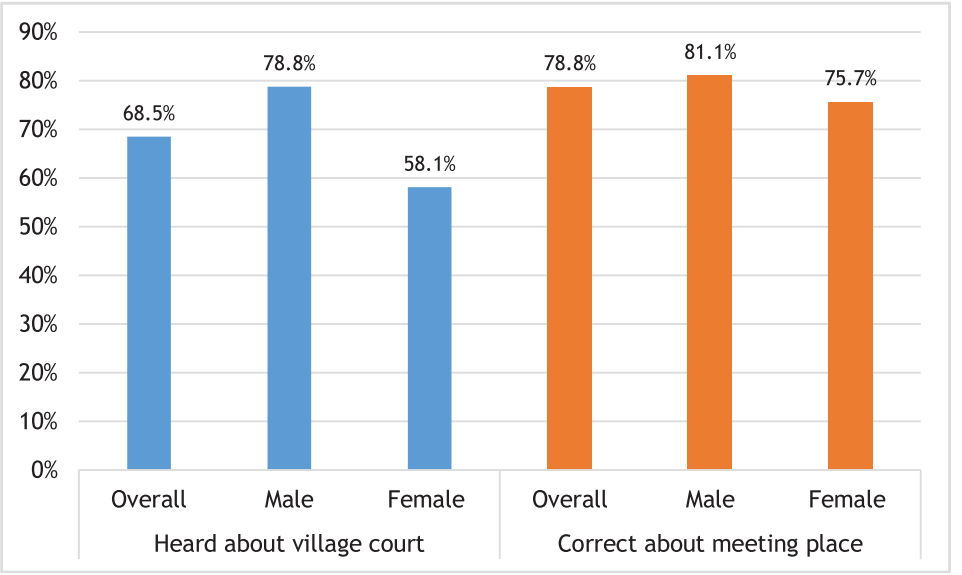



Figure 6.27: Did you hear about the village court?

The survey finds that on average, 69% of the respondents heard or knew about village court, among which 79% are male and 58% female. When this information is assessed by another question on where does it takes place, on average, 79% of the respondents who said they heard about village court could correctly mention the place. The percentages are slightly higher among male than among female, 81% compared to 76% (Figure 6.27).

The disaggregated responses by education categories show that with educational categories, the knowledge about village court increases, even though in regard to the question about the place, there is not much variation (Figure 6.28). Disaggregation by income also shows that with higher income, information about village court increases; the difference among income groups, however, are not very pronounced (Annexure Table 6.7).

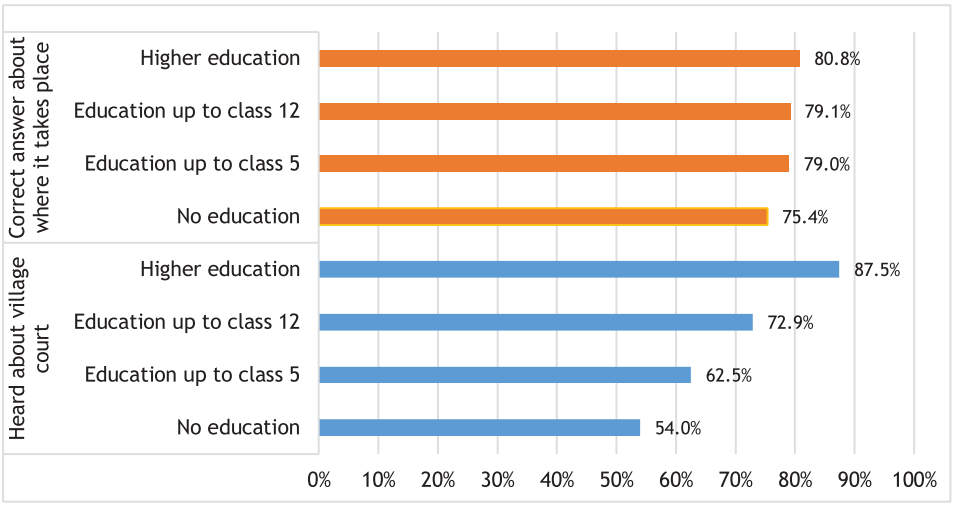



Figure 6.28: Knowledge about village court (by education groups)

## Comparison between Shalish and village court

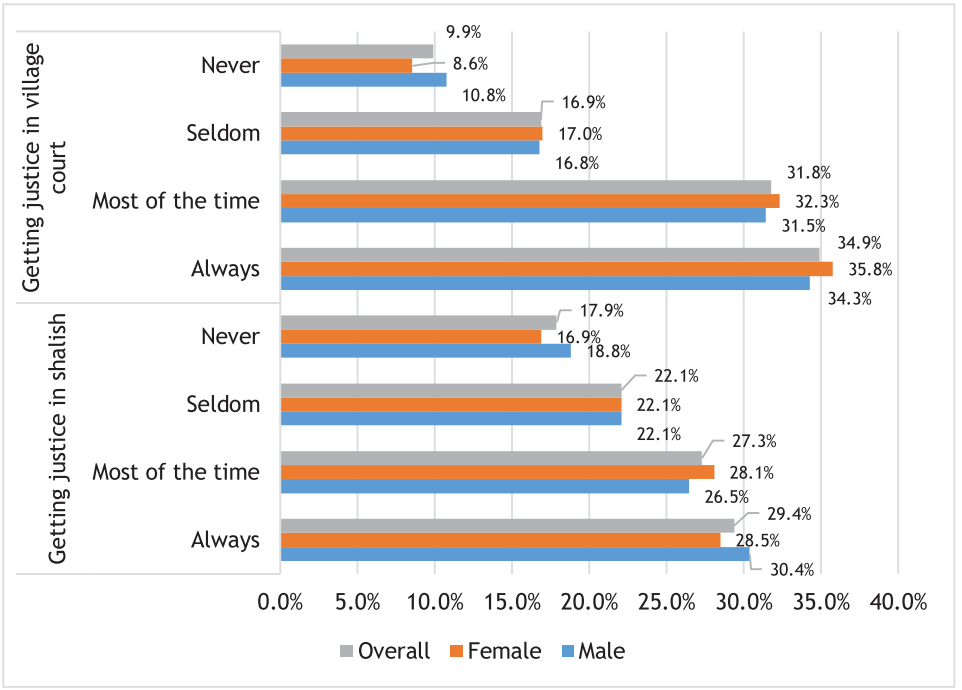



Figure 6.29: Perceptions of getting justice in Shalish and village court

When asked to rate the possibility of getting fair justice from two of the most popular forums of dispute resolution, village court and Shalish, it seems that village court is perceived to be fairer than Shalish (Figure 6.29). Around 35% of the respondents said that people always get justice from village court followed by another 32% who said that people do most of the time. The number of respondents in favor of *Shalish* are alternatively 29% and 27%. The responses do not vary much by gender.

The responses by educational categories ( Figure 6.30) show that the perception of highly educated groups remained quite similar in regard to getting justice from both Shalish and village court. On the contrary, the respondents belonging to the lowest education cohort viewed village court to be fairer compared to *Shalish*.

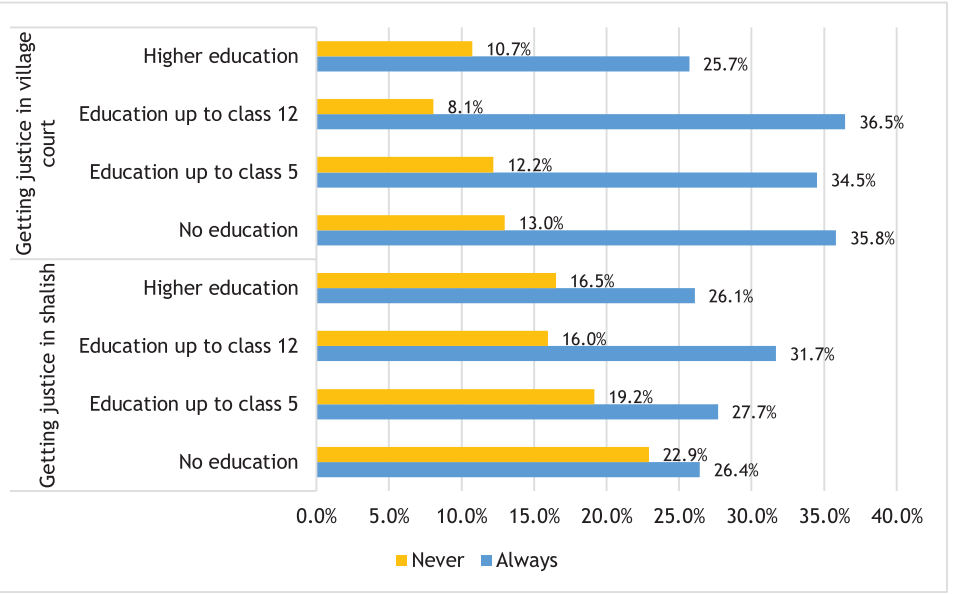



Figure 6.30: Perceptions of getting justice in Shalish and village court (by education group)

## 6.6. Gender and governance

The survey also aimed to explore support for women leadership in the governance process along with some other relevant areas (Figure 6.31). Our findings suggest that the strongest support received for women leadership in the form of their presence was in the parliament (66%), followed by government offices (61%) and political parties (56%). This acceptance could be caused by the strong presence of female leadership in the country's governance process. Women as local government leaders are also generally accepted by more than 50% of the respondents, owing to the reforms in the local government rules which have created more space for female engagement in the system.

On the contrary, support for female leadership is lowest in the areas of trade and other unions, or profession-based organizations (28%), followed by religion-based organizations (35%), and private company (39%). As expected, women are more supportive of female leadership in all the respective institutions compared to men (Figure 6.32). The difference in support is more visible regarding the parliament and government offices.

When compared with the previous year's result, it can be seen that the support for female leadership in all considered aspects has decreased in total; however, the percentage of strong support has increased in 2019 from that of 2018 (Figure 6.33). Not much variation in responses by education groups are found (see Annexure Table 6.8).

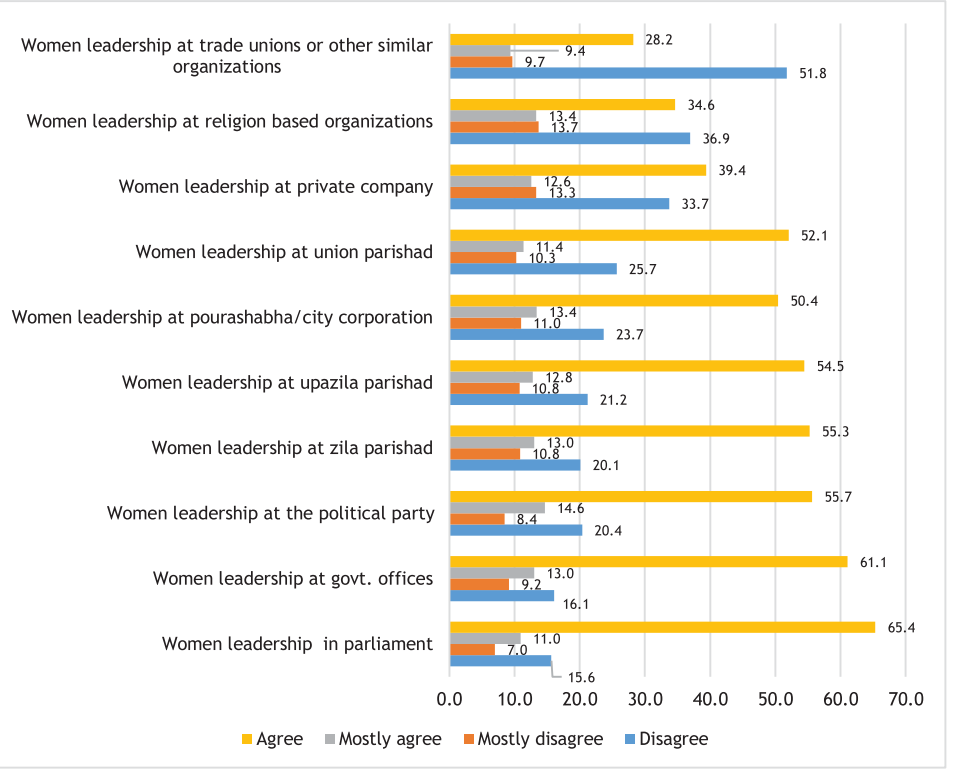



Figure 6.31: Support for female leadership in different institutions

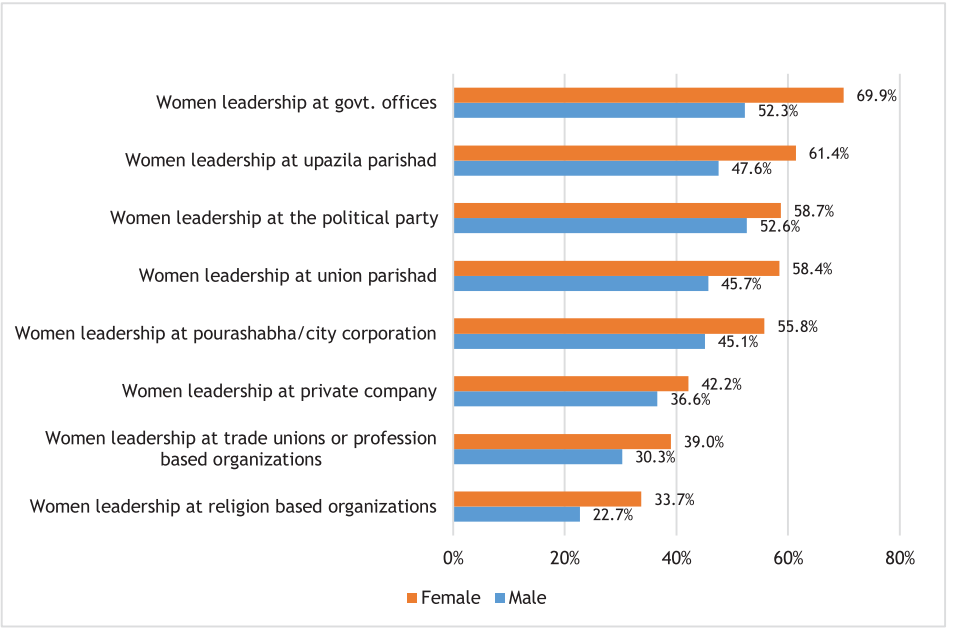



Figure 6.32: Support for female leadership in different institutions (by gender)

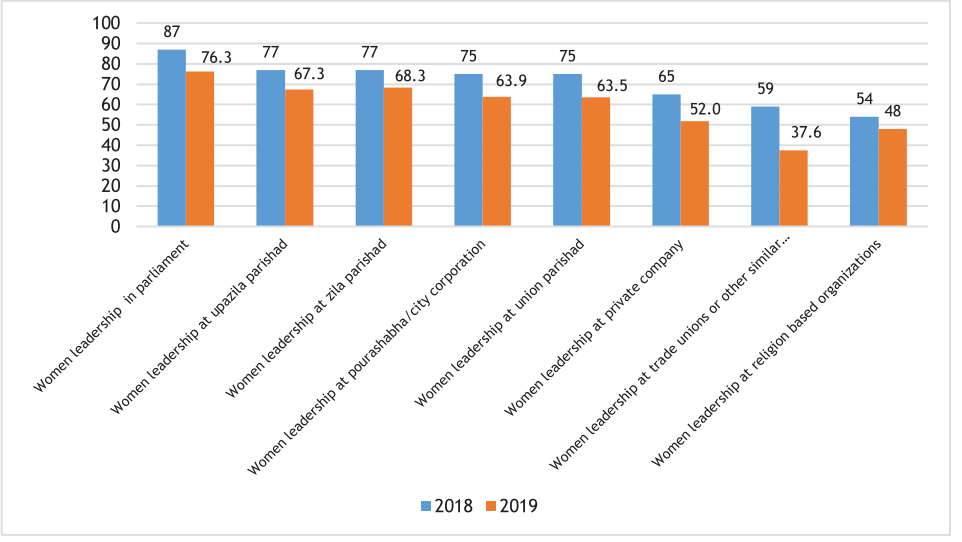



Figure 6.33: Support for female leadership (by year)

Figure 6.34 shows the variation of support by income groups. Responses regarding female leadership in different institutions did not vary much across the board. For instance, the overall support regarding female leadership at the parliament remains more or less at 80%, combining both strongly and somewhat agree; however, it should be noted that in contrast to other income groups, the highest income group tends to express their opinion comparatively strongly regarding each of the categories. For detailed table refer to Annexure Table 6.9.

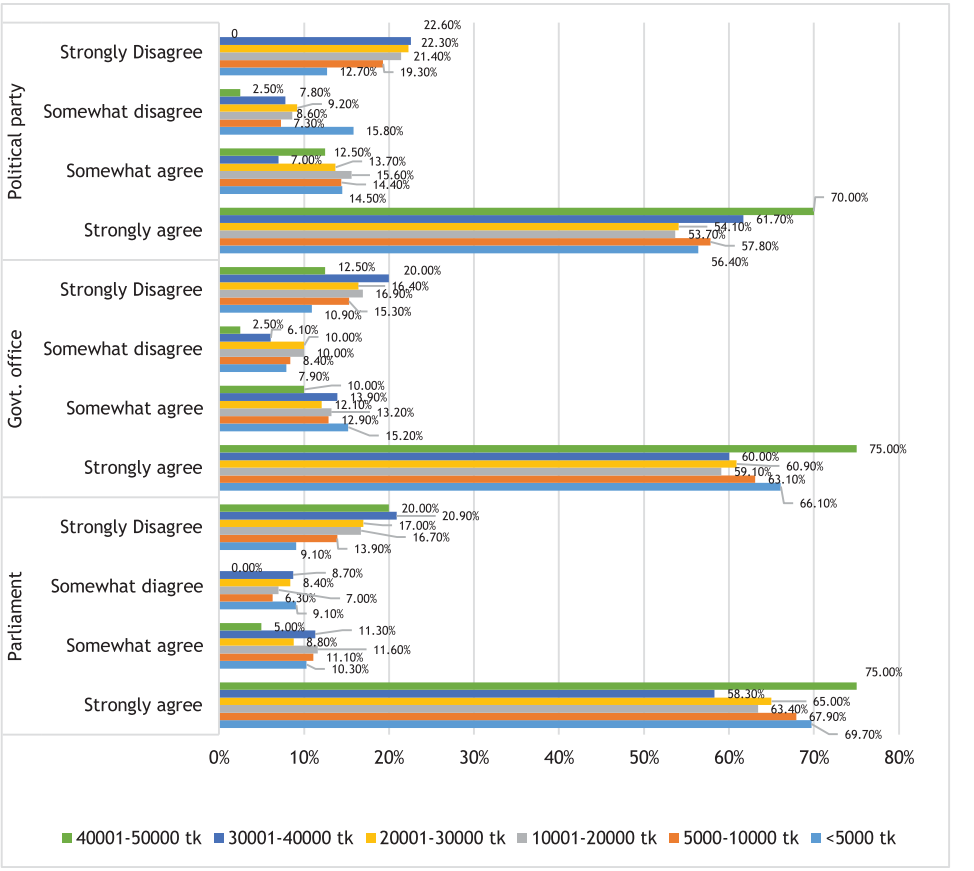



Figure 6.34: Support for women leadership in parliament, parties, and government offices (by income)

## Importance of gender identity in voting

In this section, the survey explored whether the respondents care about gender identities while they make a voting decision. The question asked was if all the qualifications remain same, among a male, female, and third gender, whom they would prefer to vote for. The majority of the respondents (54%) said that given all other things remain the same, they would prefer to vote for a male candidate (Figure 6.35). Around 22% said that they would vote for a female followed by 7% who said that they would vote for either male or female but not for a third gender. Around 17% of the respondents said that they are not concerned about gender identity while voting.

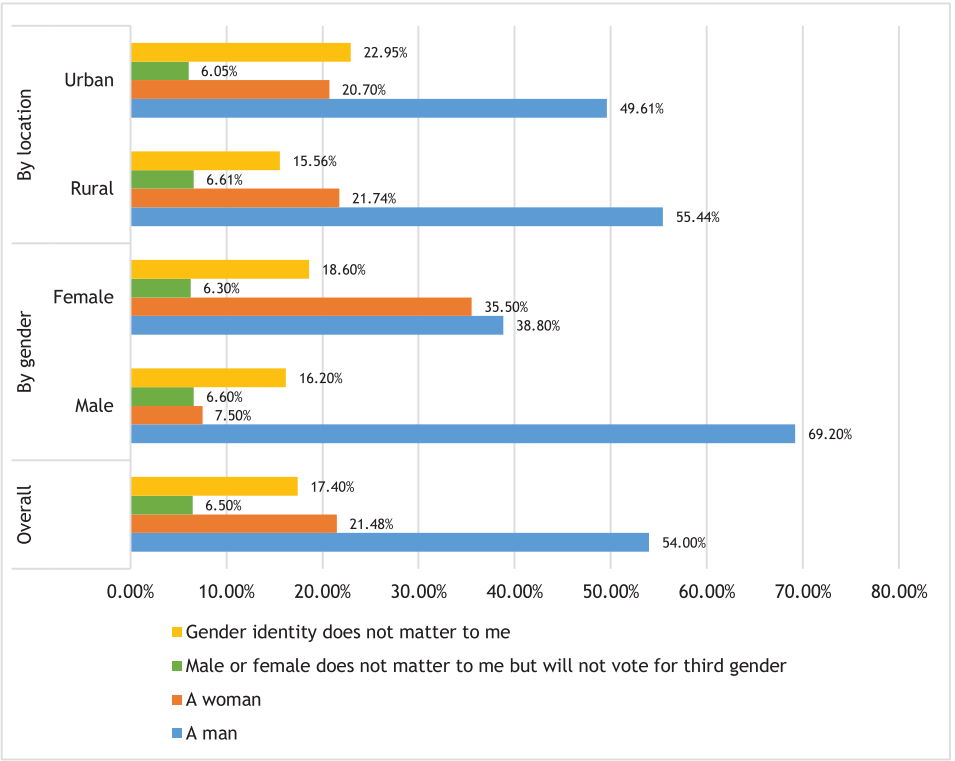



Figure 6.35: Given that qualifications do not vary, of a man, woman, and a third gender, who do you prefer to vote for your constituency in the national election? (Overall, by gender and location)

The gender disaggregated responses show that males, as expected, are more keen to vote for a male candidate. Around 69% of the male respondents reported that they would vote for a male candidate, followed by only about 8% male who would prefer to vote for female.

A large portion of our female respondents (about 39%) would prefer to vote for a male candidate followed by 36% who would prefer to vote for a female. The percentages regarding voting against the third gender are quite similar in both groups. Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents who do not consider gender identity while voting is slightly higher among the female than among the male.

The differences by location are also not very pronounced, though the support for male representatives is comparatively lower in urban areas than in rural (50% vs 55%), and not considering gender identity while voting is also higher in urban areas (23% vs 16% in rural).

The responses regarding male and female candidate do not vary much by education but it is apparent that the decision of not voting for a third gender goes down with more education (Figure 6.36). At the same time, the share of respondents who do not consider gender identity as an important factor is higher in the more educated section. The same trend is visible in income groups (Figure 6.37). Even though the differences in responses by different categories are not very pronounced, we see that disregarding gender identity in voting is a response that varies lightly among the categories, except for the highest income group, among which 40% of the respondents said that they do not consider gender as an important factor while voting.

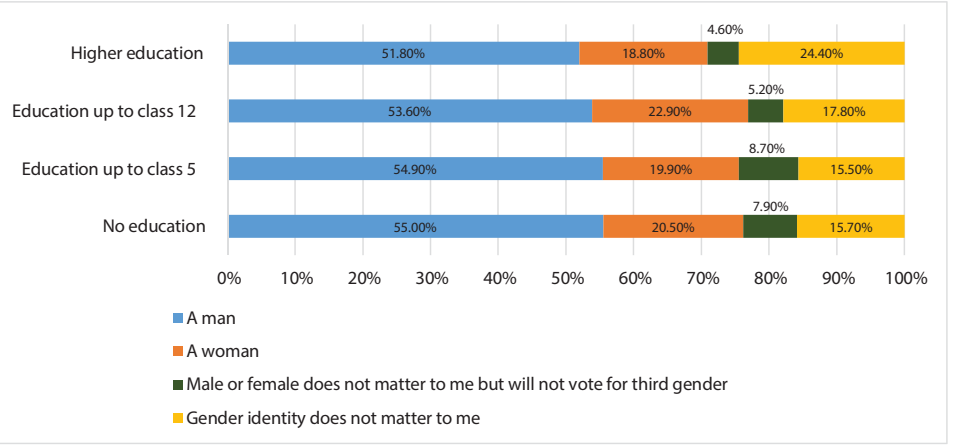



Figure 6.36: Given that qualifications do not vary, of a man, woman, and a third gender, who do you prefer to vote for your constituency in the national election? (by education)

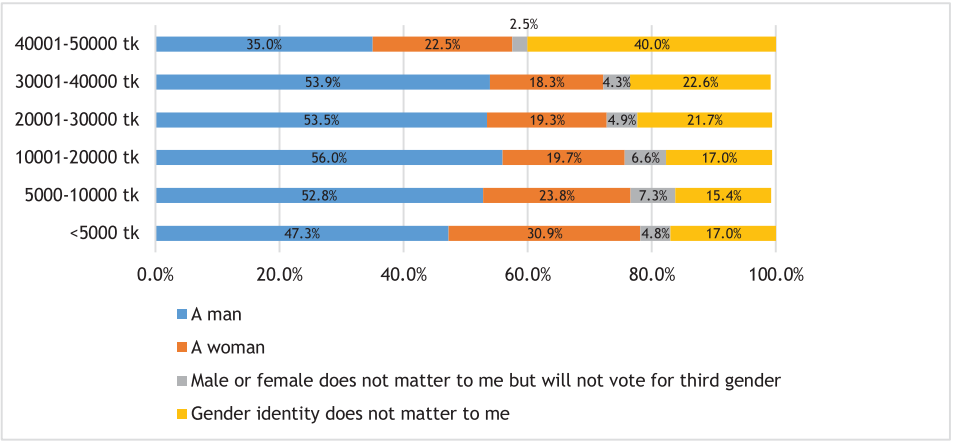



Figure 6.37: Given that qualifications do not vary, of a man, woman, and a third gender, who do you prefer to vote for your constituency in the national election? (by income)

## 6.7. Institutions and integrity

The survey also wanted to assess people's perception regarding integrity in the institutions. Figure 6.38 shows that among the four institutions of democracy, parliament is viewed as an institution of high integrity by 70% of the respondents followed by another 15% who viewed it as an institute of some integrity. Compared to the parliament, the perceived integrity of other institutes was surprisingly low. The ratings of integrity about political parties, election, and the judiciary are comparable even though it is intriguing to note that people saw parties having more integrity than the judiciary and election commission. Around 41% of the respondents viewed political parties as an institution of high integrity, which is 40% for both judiciary and election commission. Alternatively, the election commission is viewed as the institute with no or little integrity by 38%, another 37% felt the same way about the judiciary. Around 34% of the respondents believed that political parties have no or limited integrity whereas only 12% believed the parliament to have no or limited integrity. Among another set of agencies, namely the law enforcement, 81% viewed the Bangladesh Army as an institute of high integrity, followed by 78% who viewed the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) as an institute of integrity. The integrity of the police, in contrast, is perceived to be very low. Only 25% opined that police had some integrity followed by 15% who viewed it to be as an institute of limited integrity. When asked about trust in non-government organizations (NGOs) and the media, more or less 80% of the respondents replied saying that NGOs are an institution of integrity (combining high and some), followed by 70% of the respondents who made similar remarks about the media.

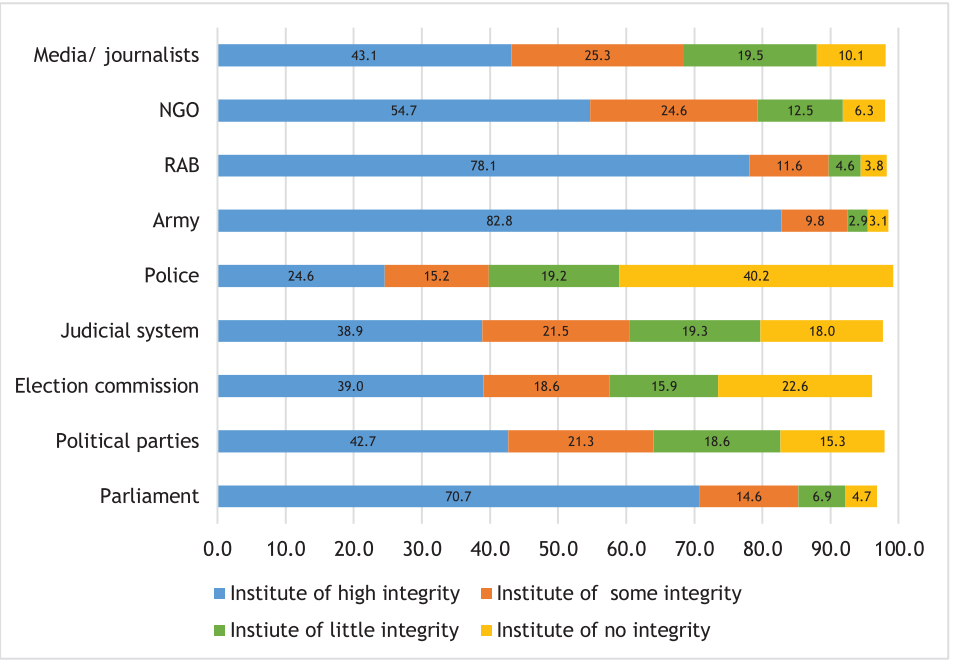



Figure 6.38: Perceived integrity ratings of different institutions

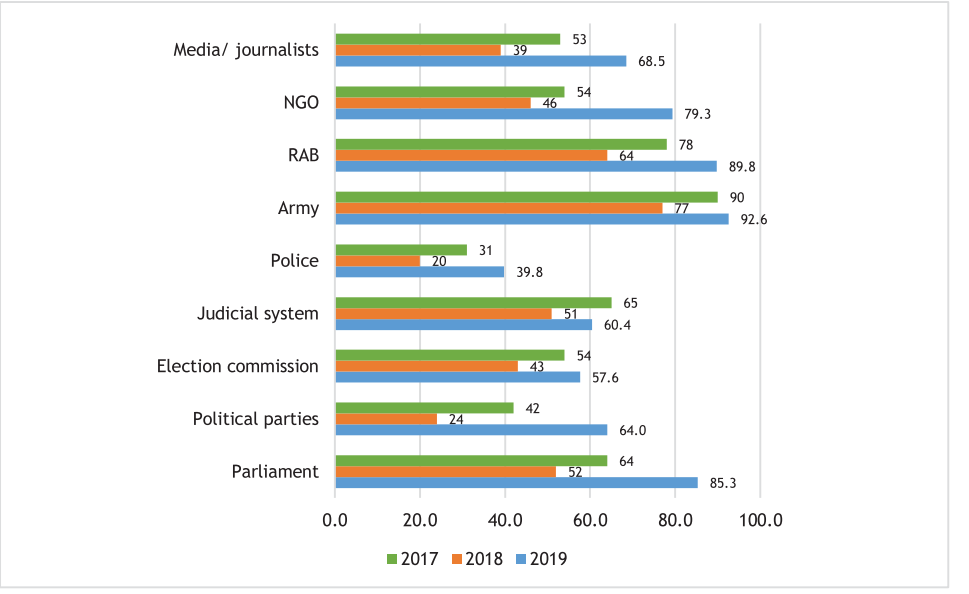



Figure 6.39: Perceived integrity (high and some) of different institutions (by year)

If compared to the previous two years, it is seen that (Figure 6.39), the perception of integrity has increased significantly. The results of this year are consistent with findings of 2017; however, 2018 results are somewhat different as it records lower integrity for every single institution.

The levels of integrity reported by education groups are shown in Figure 6.40 and Figure 6.41. The first one shows the responses of the highest and lowest education groups where ratings are grouped into two broad categories. As seen, the highly educated group's perception of a lack of integrity for each institution is higher than the low education group and vice versa. High integrity by education groups is shown in Figure 6.40. The responses, as seen, do not vary significantly but the perception of integrity among respondents with no education are higher compared to other high education groups. The difference is most notable in regard to the election commission and most close in regard to the police.

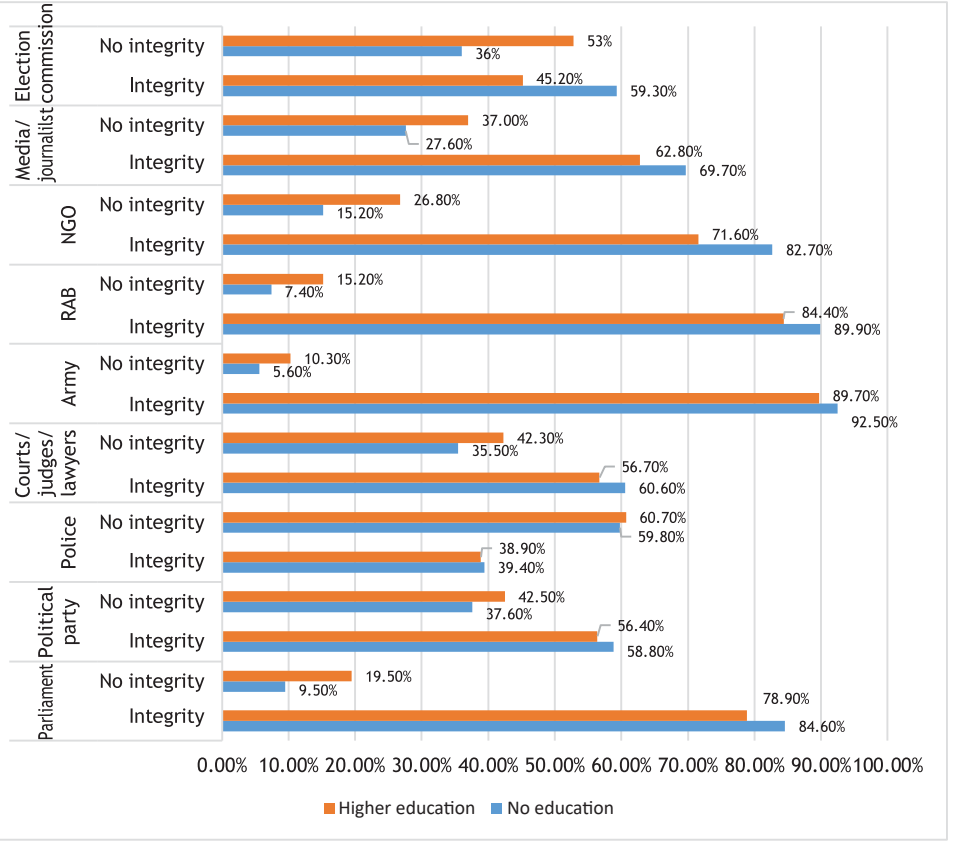



Figure 6.40: Level of integrity in different institutions by highest and lowest education groups

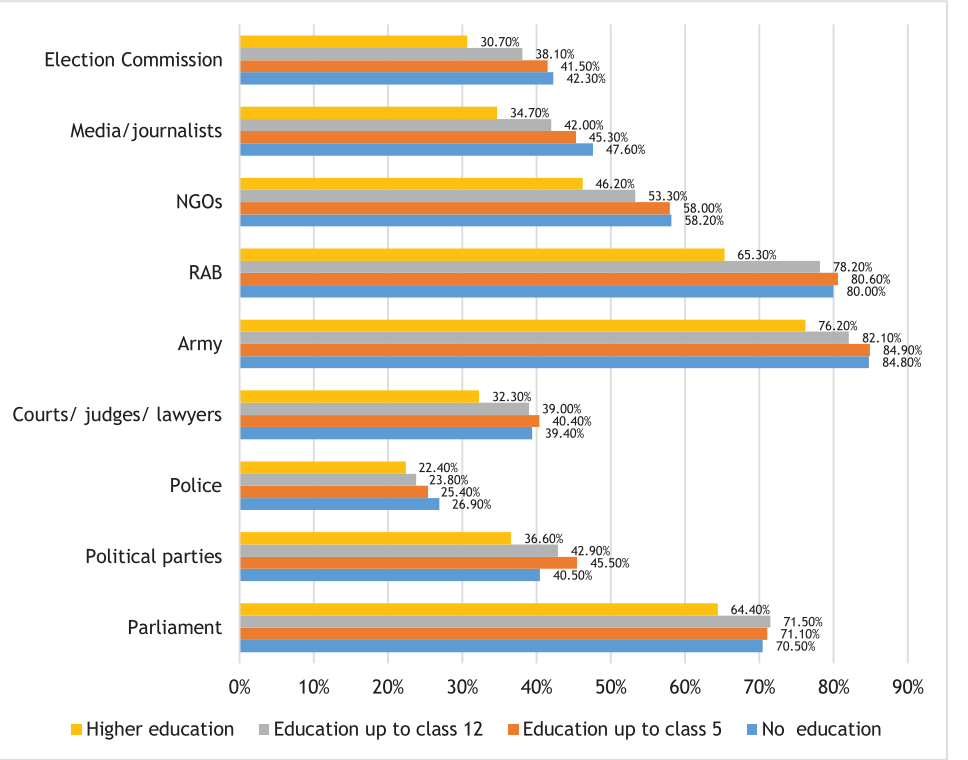



Figure 6.41: Highest integrity of different institutions by education groups

The responses also vary by the income groups. The disaggregated analysis shows that low income people usually have more trust in institutions compared to higher income groups. The rating of integrity went down with higher income (See Annexure Table 6.10). For instance, Figure 6.42 shows that only the highest integrity rating is reported by the lowest income group. As seen, except for the parliament, the ratings given by the lowest income group on integrity are comparatively high for all the considered institutions than the those given by the highest income group. The overwhelming support for the Bangladesh Army and RAB is also more visible in the lowest income group (close to 90%) which hovers around 60% for the highest income category.

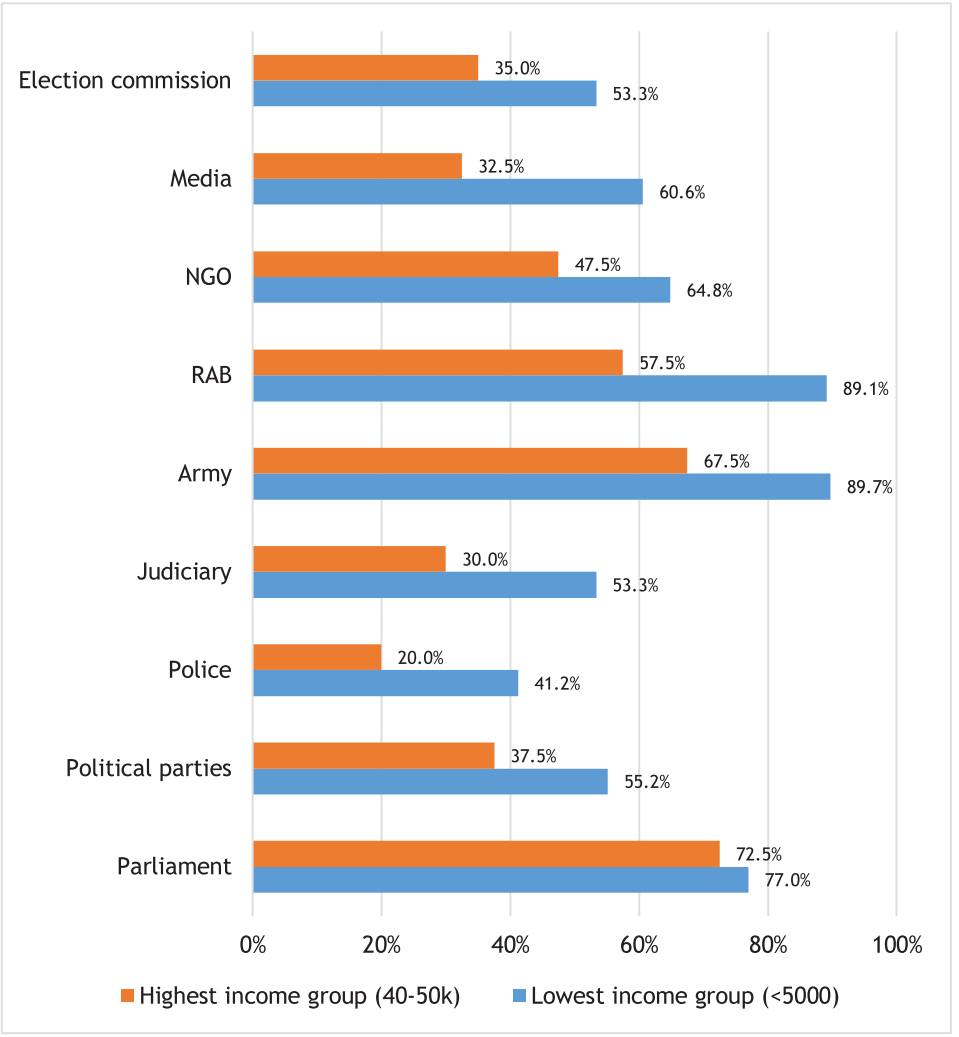



Figure 6.42: Perceived highest integrity of institutions reported by highest and lowest income groups

# 7. DIGITALIZED BANGLADESH, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND POLICY INFLUENCE

## 7.1. Access to mobile phones and the internet

In the last few years, Bangladesh has seen massive increases in the use of mobile phones and the internet. The survey has reflected this trend quite well. The findings suggest that about 89% of our respondents have their own mobile phones. The percentage is higher among males (94%) compared to females (85%). Respondents with higher education were more likely to own a mobile phone. Figure 7.1 shows the percentage of respondents who owns a mobile phone.

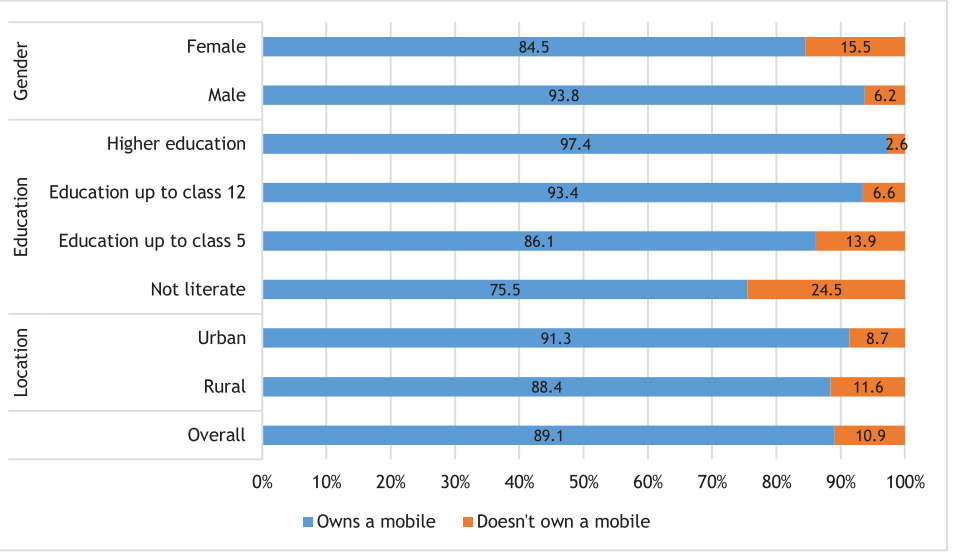



Figure 7.1: Respondents who own mobile phones

The majority of the respondents from all cohort of income groups owns mobile phones. Annex 7.1 shows the percentage of the respondents who owns a mobile phone by income groups.

The respondents were asked if they have access to the internet (Figure 7.2). About 35% of the respondents were found to have access to the internet. The respondents from urban areas are more likely to have access to the internet than those from rural areas. The access improves with education, as evident in Figure 7.2.

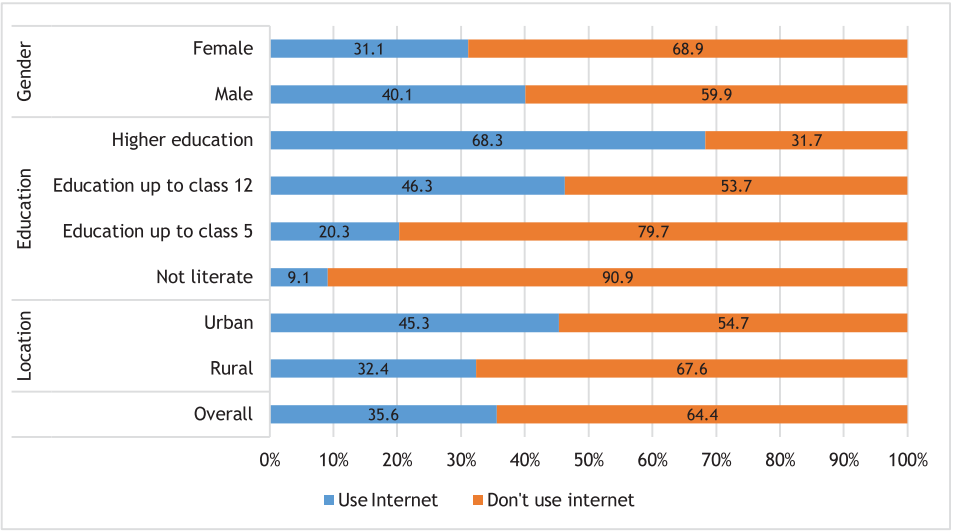
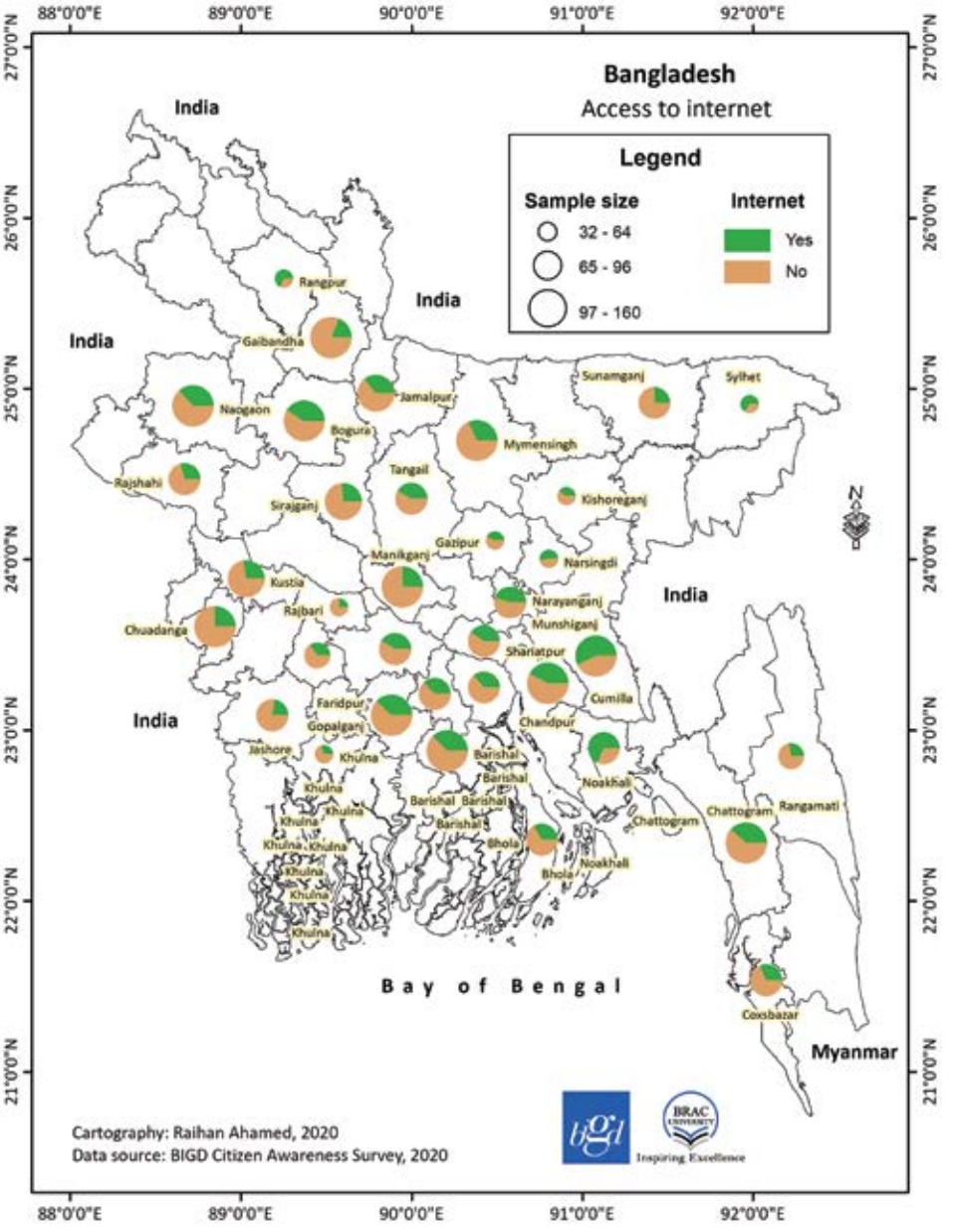



Figure 7.2: Respondents' access to the internet

Respondents from higher income groups are more likely to have internet access. Annex 7.2 presents the percentage of respondents who have internet access by income groups.




Map 7.1: Respondents' access to the internet by district

## 7.2. Communicating through the internet

Respondents who have access to the internet were asked about the platforms they use to communicate with others. The majority of the respondents uses IMO (86%) followed by Facebook (71%). The popularity of Facebook Messenger is also quite high among the respondents. Interestingly, all the platforms, except IMO, are more popular among males. Disaggregated by gender, Figure 7.3 shows the platforms respondents use for communication.

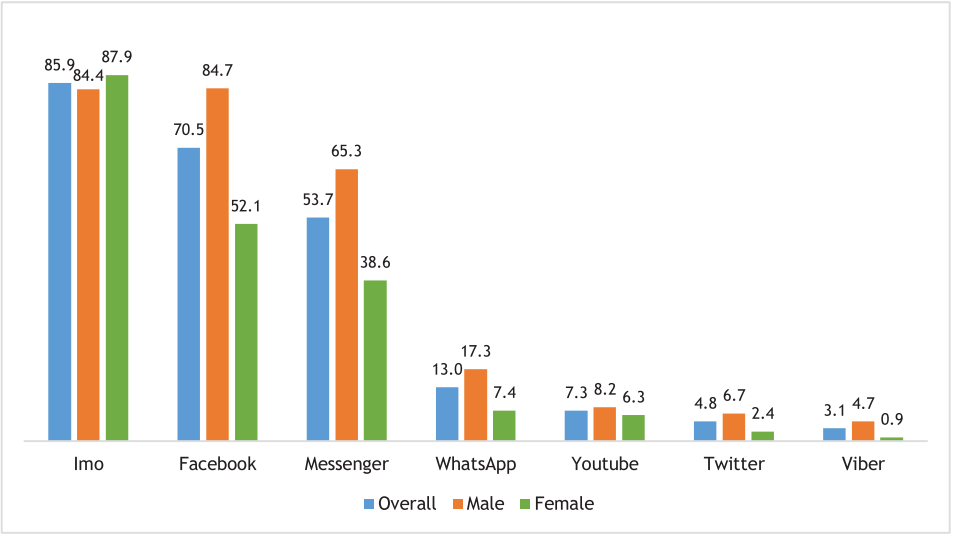



Figure 7.3: Platforms that respondent use for communication (by gender)

Disaggregation by education categories reveals that IMO remains the most popular platform across all education categories, even though the highest education group uses Facebook more than IMO (Table 7.1). It should also be noted that except for IMO and YouTube, the use of all other platforms goes up with education. The division-wise disaggregation (Figure 7.4) shows that Facebook is reported to be most popular in Rangpur. The use of WhatsApp is reportedly high in Sylhet whereas IMO is more popular in Chattogram, Sylhet and Mymensingh.

[1]IMO (often stylised as imo) is a platform where respondents can chat, audio call, and video call with their contacts

| | Not literate | Education up to class 5 | Education up to class 12 | Higher education |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| IMO | 94.7 | 92.0 | 84.9 | 82.1 |
| Facebook | 35.1 | 51.4 | 73.4 | 85.5 |
| Facebook Messenger | 24.6 | 33.5 | 56.5 | 69.1 |
| WhatsApp | 1.8 | 3.8 | 14.2 | 19.3 |
| YouTube | 10.5 | 2.4 | 8.2 | 7.2 |
| Twitter | 1.8 | 0.9 | 4.7 | 10.1 |
| Viber | 1.8 | 0.9 | 3.0 | 6.3 |

Table 7.1: Platforms that respondents use for communication (by education)

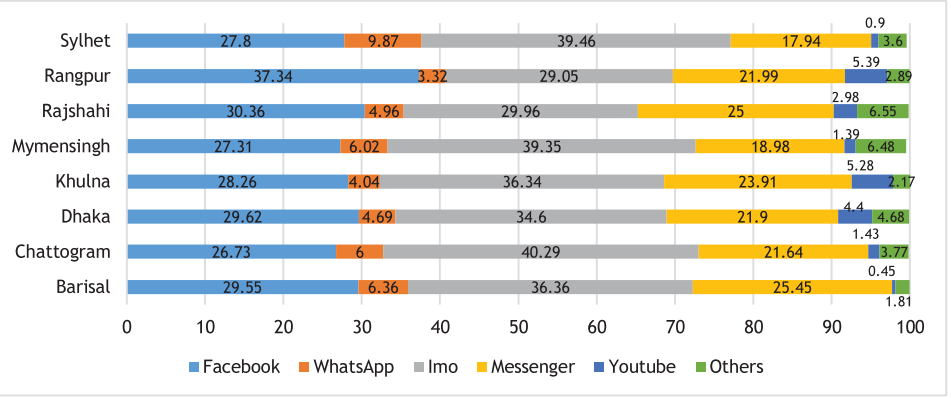



Figure 7.4: Platforms that respondents use for communication (by region)

Most of the stated platforms are generally used for chatting and making phone calls, both audio and video. Among the platforms, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are used for sharing opinions on different issues, including social and political, news, entertainment, etc. Respondents who use Facebook/Twitter were asked about the reasons they use these platforms for (Figure 7.5). About 74% of the respondents who use Facebook reported that they use these platforms to get national news, while about 60% stated that they use these platforms to share their ideas and concerns with their friends and community members.

The divisional disaggregation doesn't show much variation but is is worth mentioning that Chattogram and Sylhet divisions recorded the highest responses regarding using social media for political and religious purposes (Figure 7.6). Disaggregated by the area of living, educational qualification, gender, and income, Annexe 7.6 presents respondents' purpose behind using Facebook.

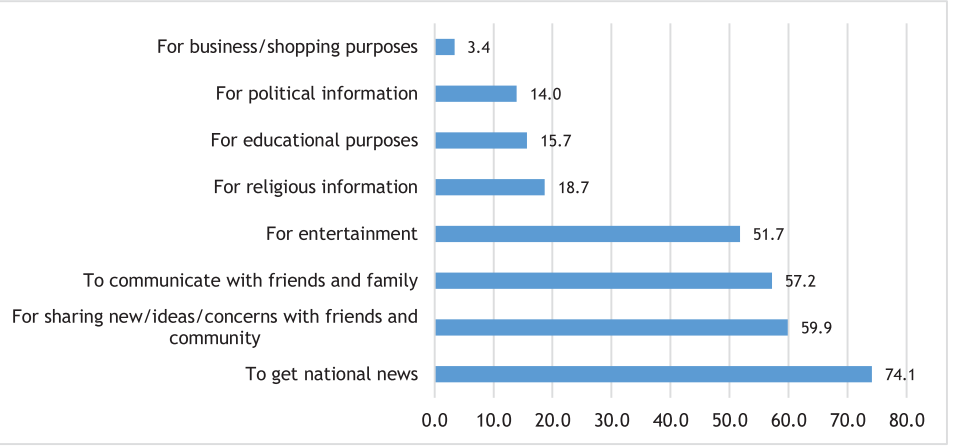



Figure 7.5: Purpose of using Facebook

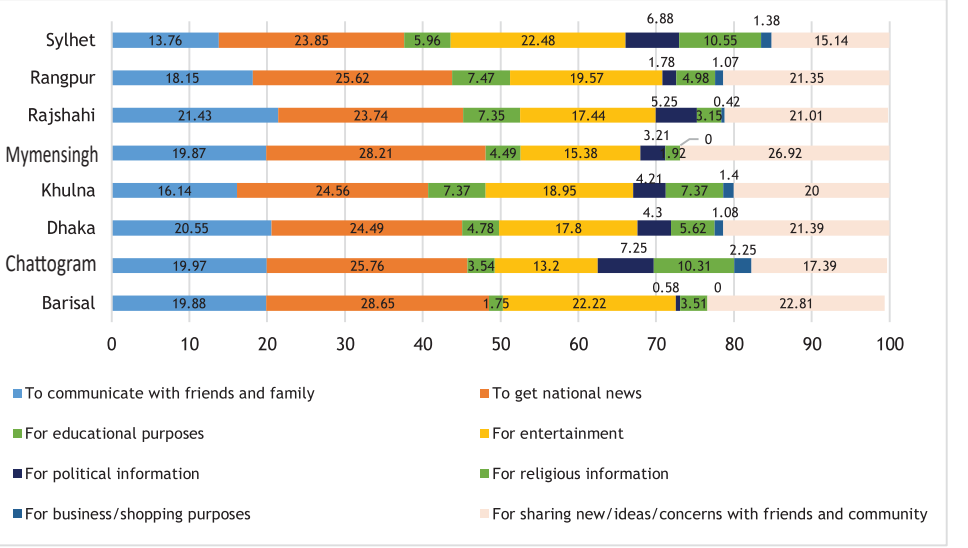



Figure 7.6 Purpose of using Facebook (by region)

## 7.3 Use of Facebook

When explored further, it was found that respondents who use Facebook mostly use it to get national news. Irrespective of education categories, Facebook remains the most popular platform to get national news, and the percentage of respondents using Facebook for national news increases with education. Women are somewhat less likely to use these platforms to get national news compared to their male counterpart.

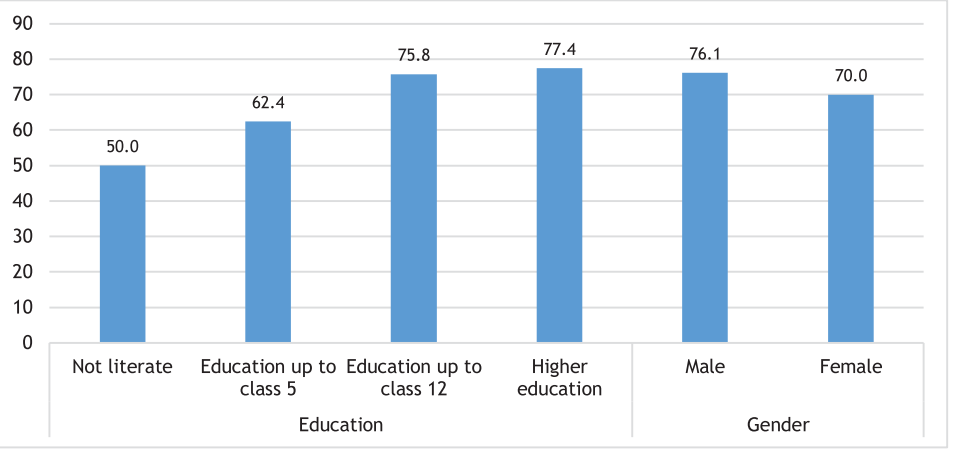



Figure 7.7: Percentage of people that uses Facebook as a source of national news

Apart from that, approximately 17% of the respondents use Facebook to get information on political issues. The pattern does not vary much by education categories (Figure 7.7). About 8% of the female respondents seek political information through Facebook, which is about half of the male respondents.

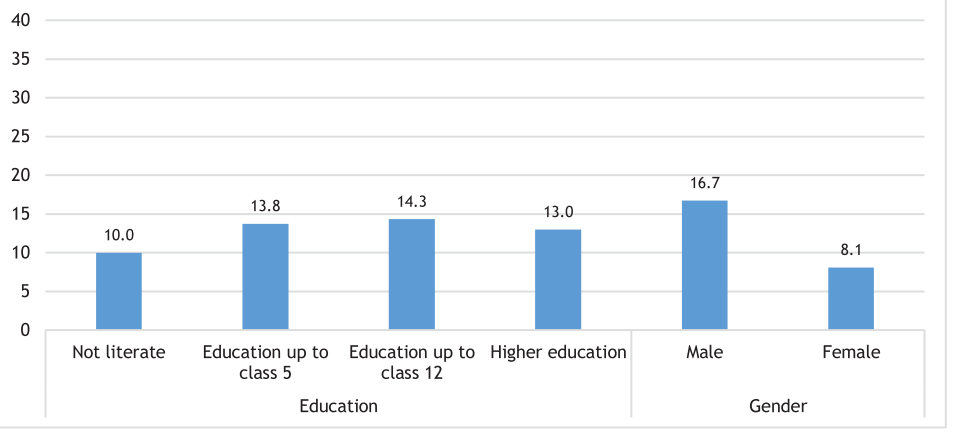
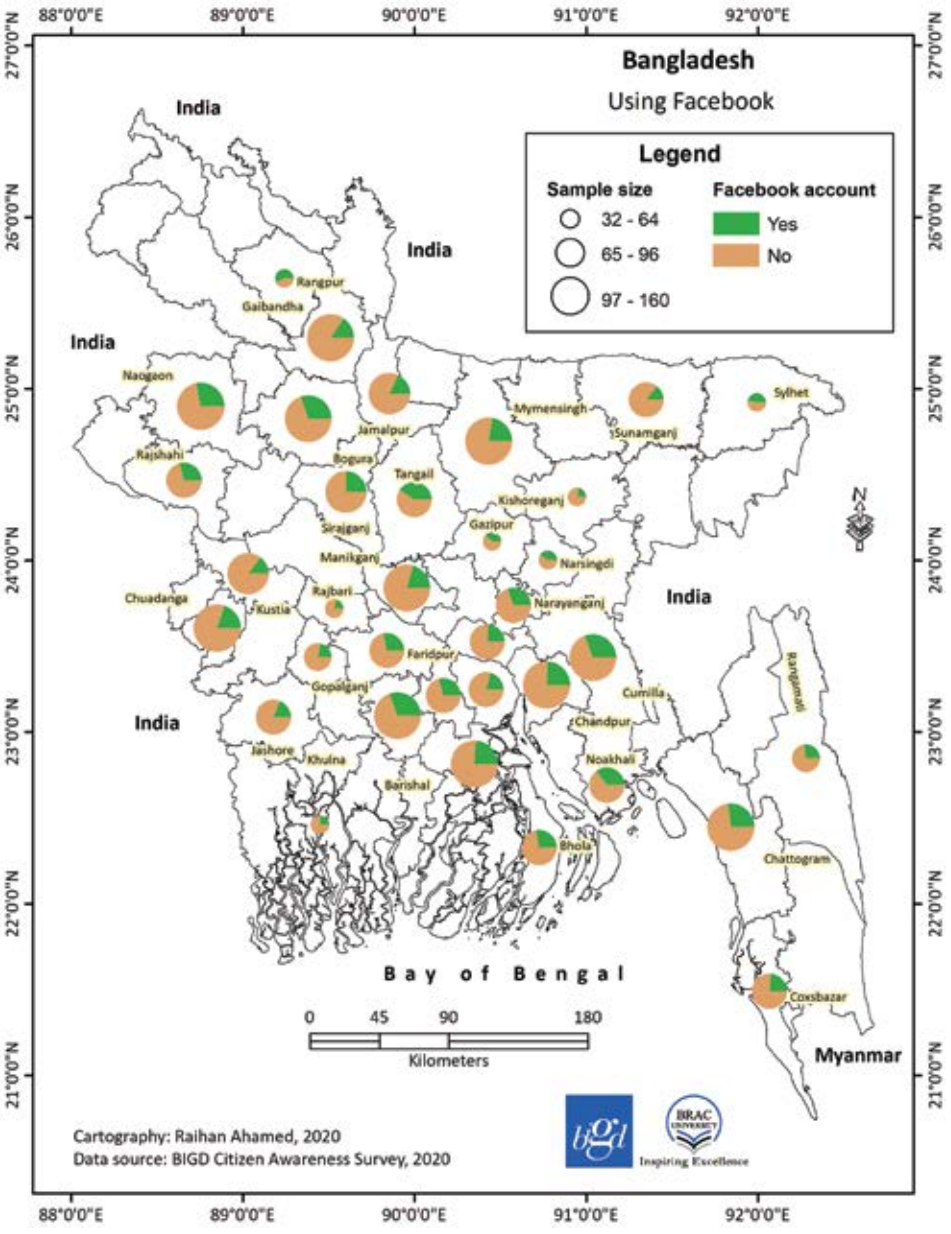



Figure 7.8: Percentage of people that uses Facebook as a source of political information




Map 7.2: Percentage of respondents using Facebook (by district)

## Ensuring governance through Facebook

When asked if citizens can ensure responsiveness of the state through Facebook (Figure 7.9), the majority (51%) of the respondents opined that Facebook cannot be used to ensure responsiveness of the state (combining not very often and never). Less than one-third of the respondents (about 28%) believed that citizens can ensure responsiveness (combining almost all the time or often) through Facebook. Difference by location is not very pronounced; however, males are slightly more likely to view that Facebook can be used to make state responsive, while one-quarter of the female respondents chose "do not know" as their response. The positive responses regarding the use of Facebook to make the state responsive also increase with education.

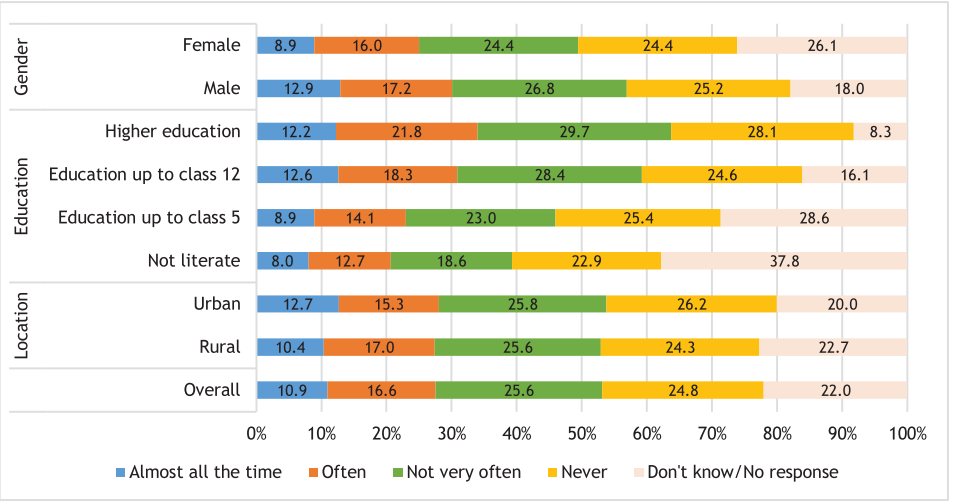



Figure 7.9: Opinions on whether citizens can ensure the responsiveness of the state through Facebook

Respondents from all income groups provided a similar opinion on whether citizens can ensure responsiveness of the state through Facebook. Annex 7.3 shows the disaggregated responses by income groups.

## Posting opinions on Facebook

Most of the respondents did not think that it is safe to post their opinions regarding the political governance of the country on Facebook (Figure 7.10). About 76% of the

respondents said that it is never or almost never safe to post political opinions on Facebook. Only about 8% responded that it is generally safe. Concerns regarding posting political opinions on Facebook increase with education. About 73% of the respondents belonging to the highest education group thought that it is never safe to post their opinions regarding political governance. Compared to rural areas, a higher percentage of urban respondents believed that it is safer not to post their opinions on this matter.

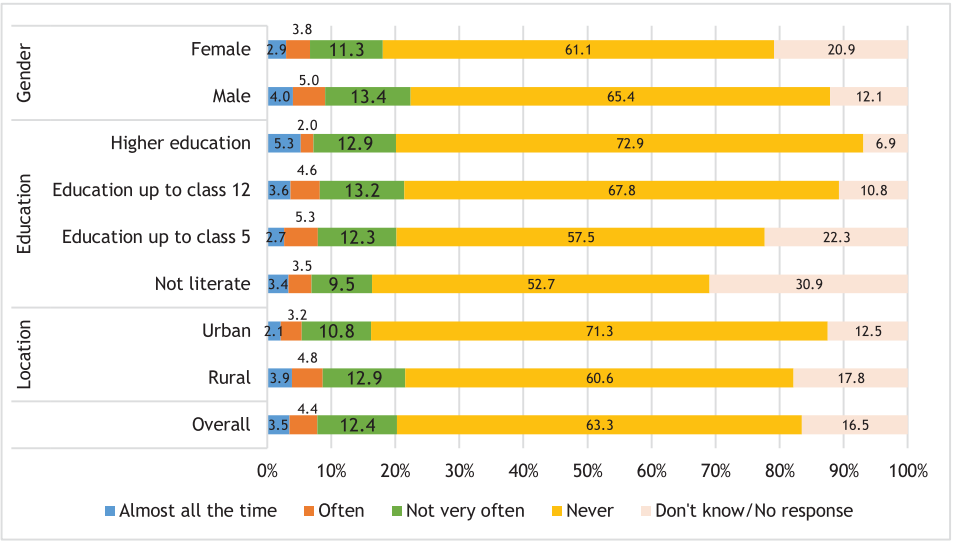



Figure 7.10: Do people think that it is safe to post your opinions regarding the political governance of the country.

Respondents from the higher income cohort are more likely to think that it is never safe to post opinions regarding the political governance of the country. Annex 7.4 shows people's views on posting political opinions by income group.

Compared to political governance, relatively more respondents thought that it is safer to post opinions about social issues of the country (about 21%) (Figure 7.11) . However, 64% of the respondents still believed that it is never or almost never safe to post opinions about social issues of the country. The opinions across education groups or locations showed a similar pattern—respondents living in urban areas and with more education are the most cautious about posting on Facebook. Male-female variation is not very pronounced, even though males were found comparatively more cautious.

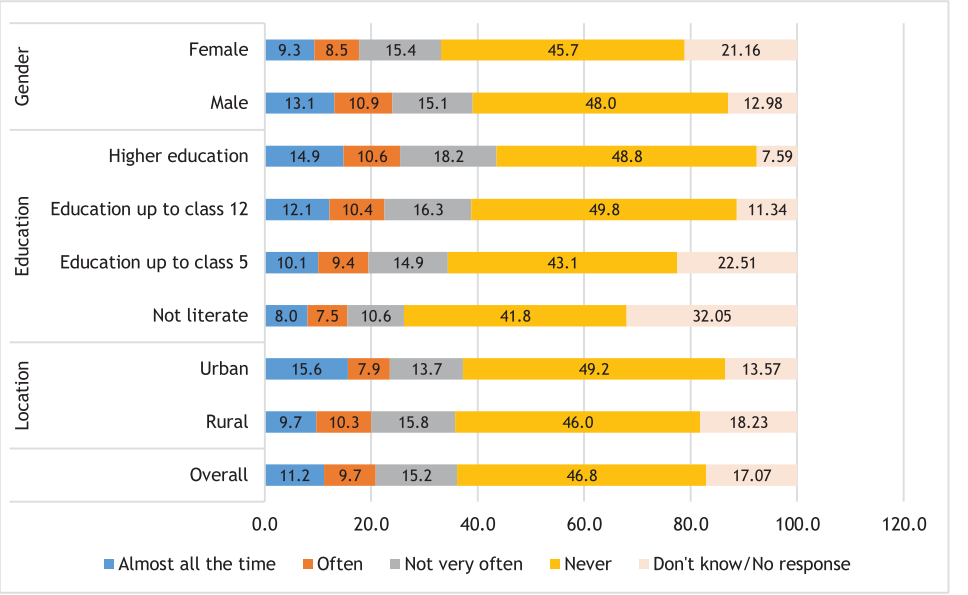



Figure 7.11: Do people think that it is safe to post your opinions regarding social issues of the country?

# 8. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

## 8.1. Understanding development

This section begins by asking respondents what they understand by development. Respondents deemed the development of infrastructures like roads and bridges as the most important feature of development (33%), followed by the development of education (19%), generation of electricity (16%), and poverty reduction (15%). Development of health system (7%) and prevention of unemployment (7%) were considered as features of development as well. Interestingly, only a very few respondents (less than 1%) considered agricultural and industrial development as measurable indicators of development (Figure 8.1).

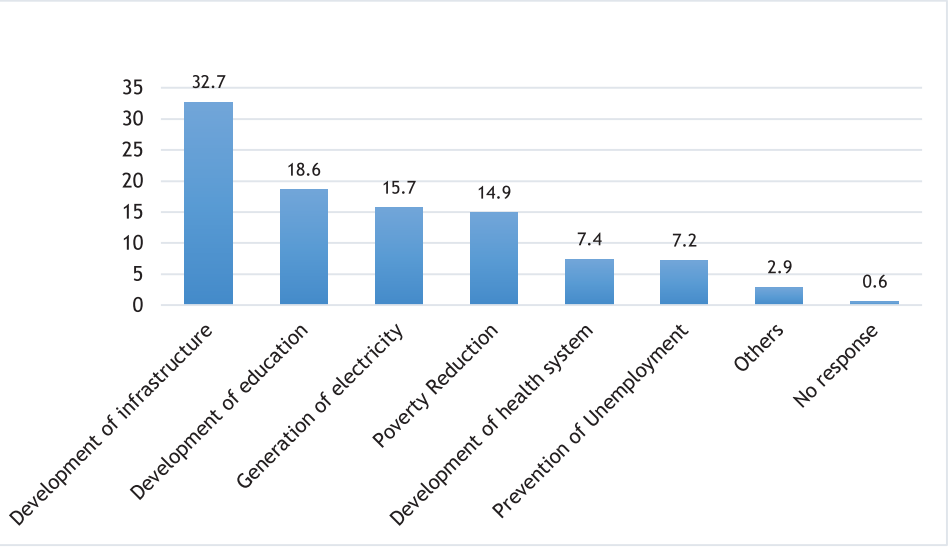



Figure 8.1: What do you understand by development?

While respondents living in urban areas responded slightly more for every category (Figure 8.2) compared to respondents living in rural areas, the latter group, not unexpectedly, gave slightly more importance to poverty reduction compared to the former. In general, there are no significant differences between rural and urban respondents about what development means to them.

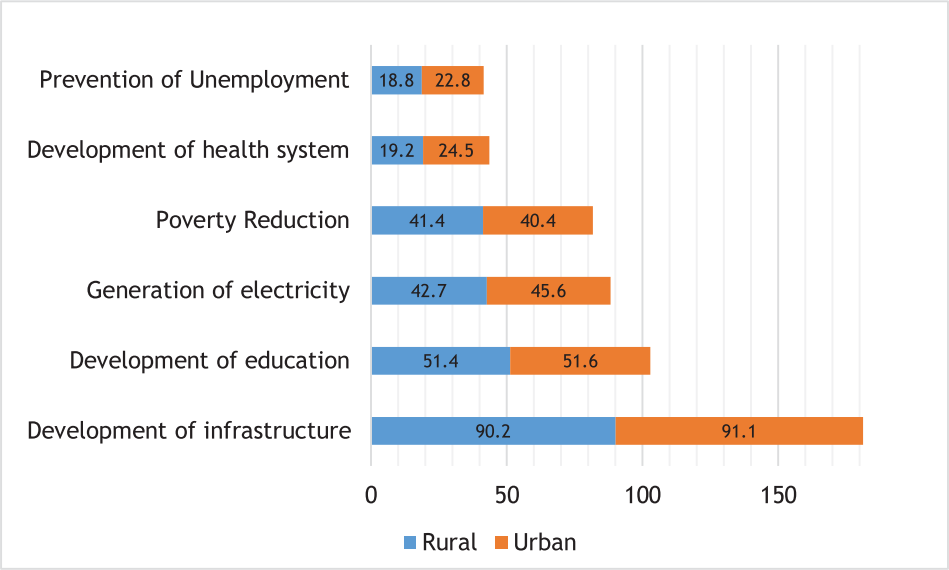



Figure 8.2: Understanding development (by area)

Disaggregation by income (Figure 8.3) shows that the development of infrastructure gets more than 85% of support from all income cohorts, with some more support from the highest income category. Other than that, respondents belonging to the highest income cohort (earning more than BDT 40,000 per month) responded more towards the development of the healthcare system, development of education, and development of infrastructure. In contrast, respondents belonging to the lowest income cohort (with a monthly income lower than BDT 5,000) valued poverty reduction the most (44%). Another notable idea of development for most of the respondents earning around BDT 20,000-30,000 a month is the prevention of unemployment (24%).

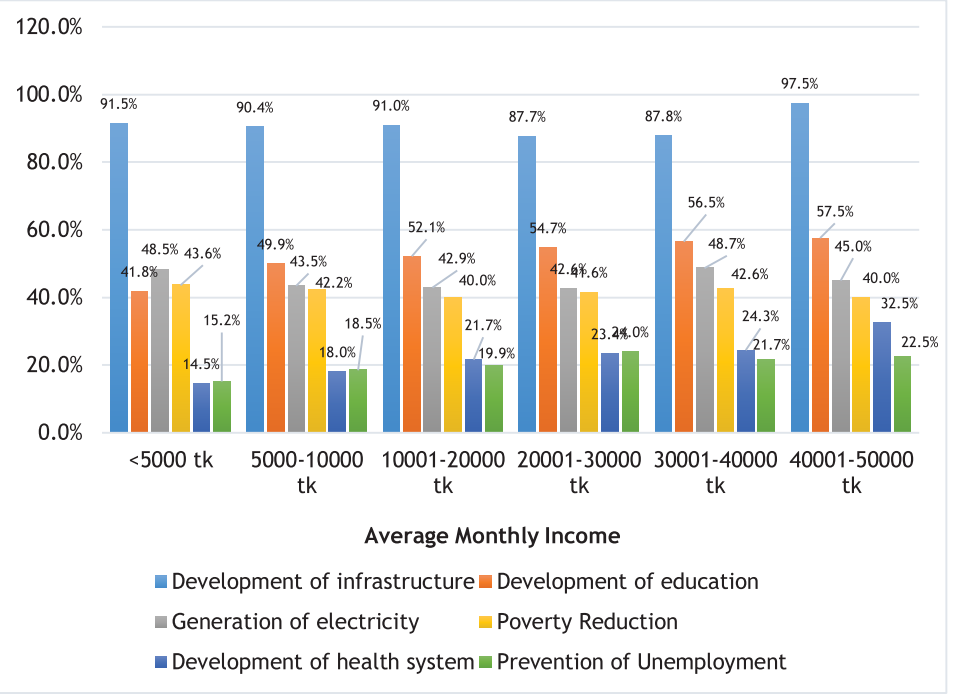



Figure 8.3: Understanding development (by income)

## 8.2. Perception regarding inclusive development

The next question sought to understand if the current development process can be perceived as equally beneficial for different groups of respondents. First, we looked at gender equality. More than half (about 55%) of the respondents perceived the current development process as absolutely equally beneficial for both men and women, while 18% felt that it was roughly equal and 13% felt that there was a little equality. About 12% of the respondents also felt that there was no equality at all (Figure 8.4).

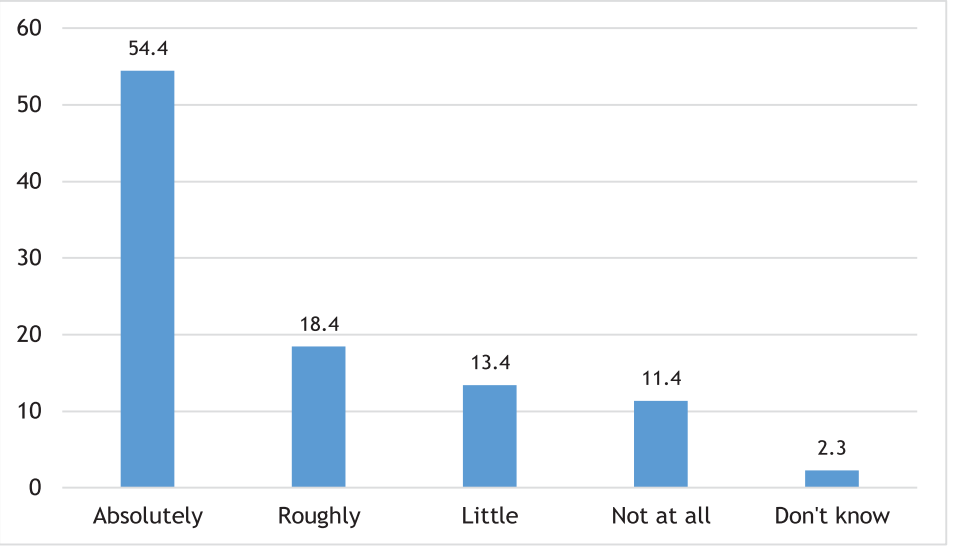



Figure 8.4: Is the current development process equally beneficial for men and women?

When the overall response was disaggregated by gender, a similar trend was found, even though a lower percentage of women believed that the current development process is equally beneficial for both (Figure 8.5). The majority of both men and women (57% and 52%) felt that the current development process was absolutely beneficial. About 18% of both groups felt that it is roughly beneficial, whereas 13% male and 14% female felt that it is very little beneficial for both genders. Only 10% male and 13% female felt that the development process was not equally beneficial at all.

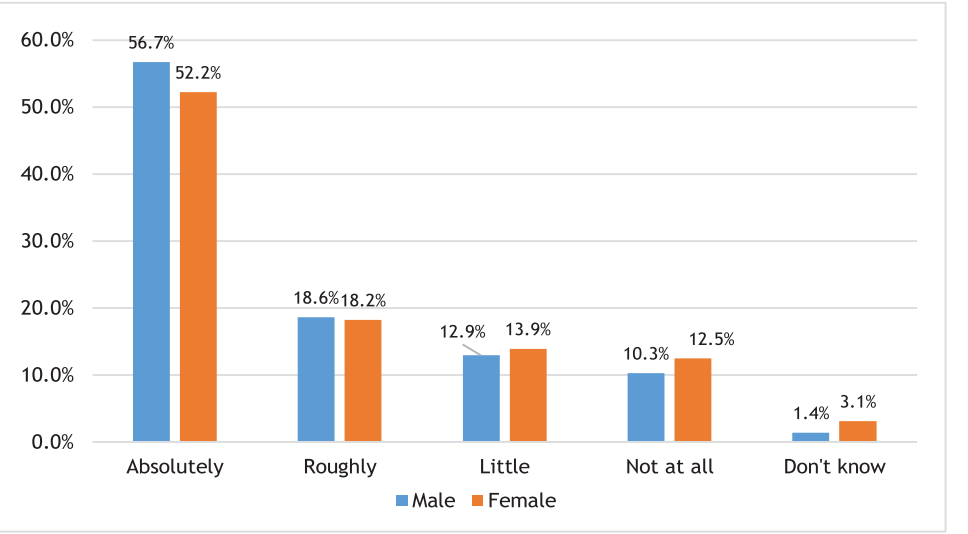



Figure 8.5: Is the development process equally beneficial for men and women? (by gender)

Interestingly, respondents with the highest and the lowest education seemed to find the process less "absolutely" equal compared to respondents with mid-level education. These are the respondents who also report higher percentages of "not at all" (14%) compared to others (Figure 8.6).

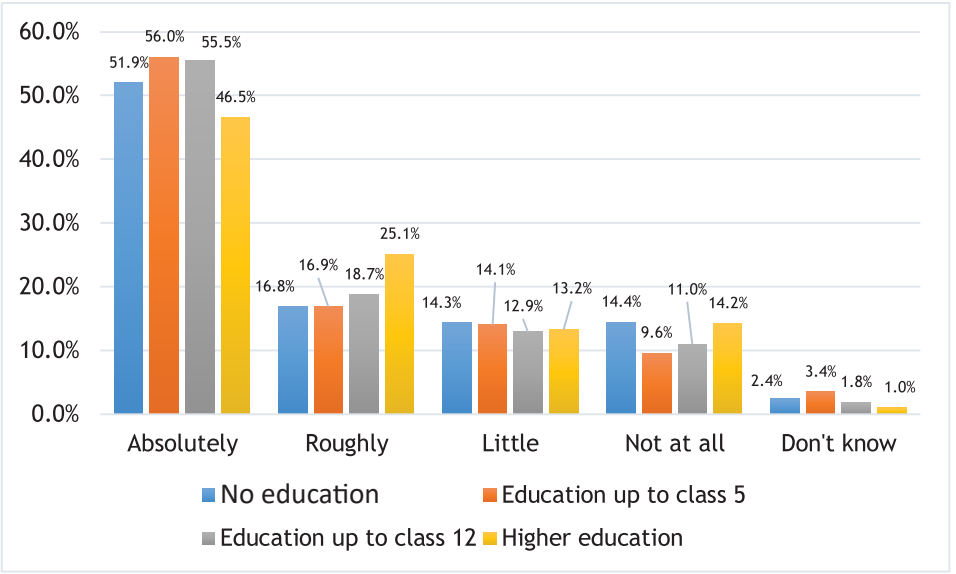



Figure 8.6: Is the development process equally beneficial for men and women? (by education)

Income-wise segregation shows (Figure 8.7) that around 65% of the respondents in the lowest income group found the current development process absolutely beneficial for both genders, whereas around 42% of the highest income group have the same response. On the other hand, about 20% of the lowest income and 25% of the highest income groups found the current development process little or not at all beneficial for both the genders.

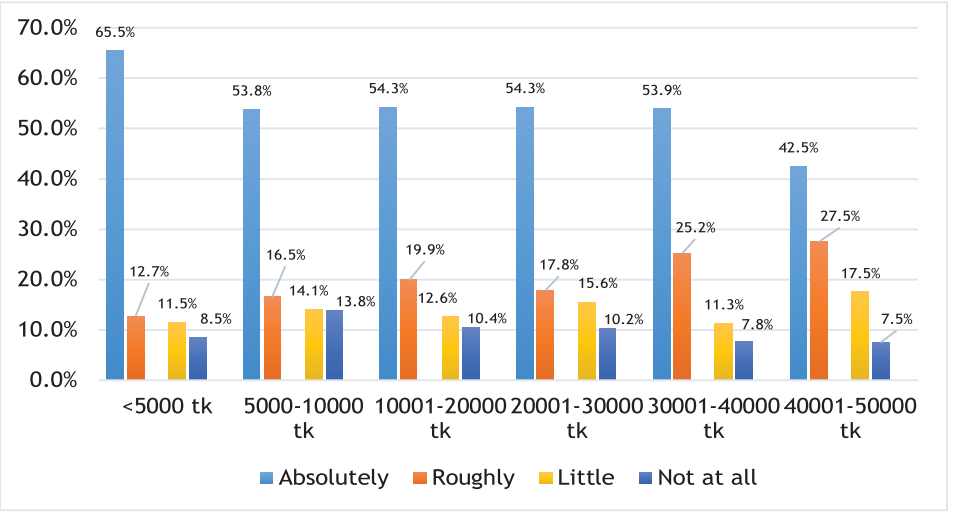



Figure 8.7: Is the development process equally beneficial for men and women? (by income)

However, when the respondents were next asked if the current development process is equally beneficial for all income classes, their responses varied. About 28% said that it was absolutely beneficial, 13% said roughly so, 22% said little, and 35% said it was not at all equally beneficial for respondents of all income classes. The single largest group of the respondents (35%) found the current development process not at all equally beneficial for respondents of all income classes (Figure 8.8).

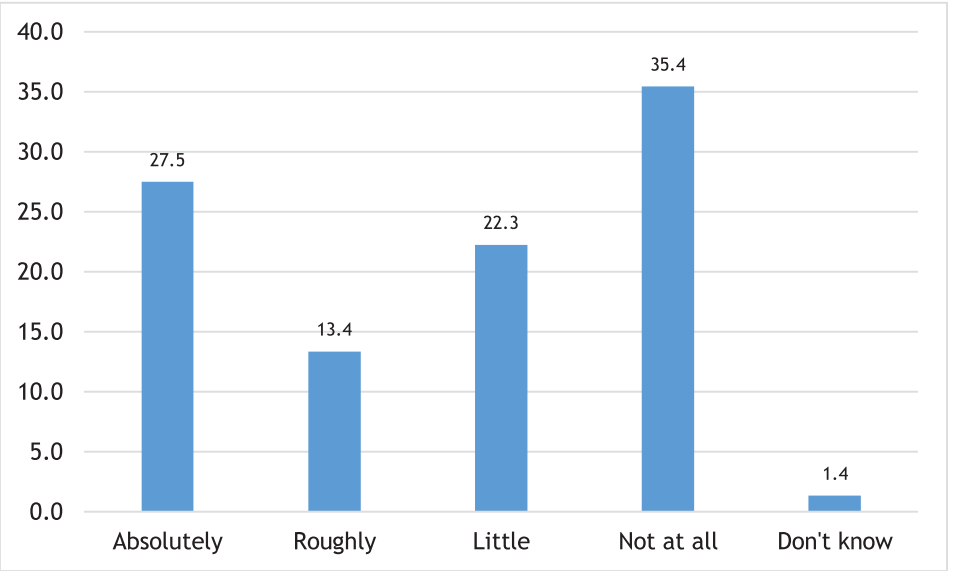



Figure 8.8: Is the current development process equally beneficial for all income classes?

Intriguingly, the respondents belonging to the lowest income category answered more towards the development process as being absolutely equal (38%) than they answered for it being not at all equal (33%). On the other hand, every other category of respondents, except this lowest income category, answered more towards the development process as not being equally beneficial at all for all income classes (Figure 8.9).

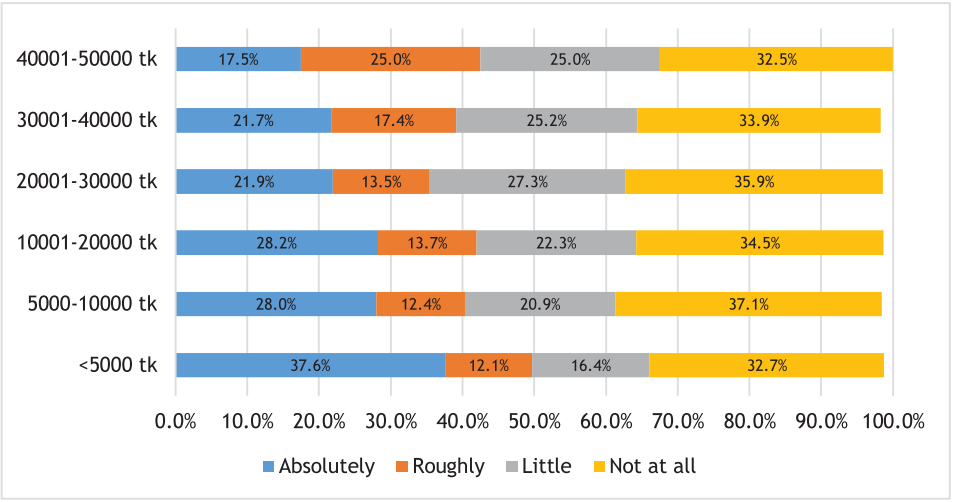



Figure 8.9: Responses based on average monthly income

But when responses based on education categories were compared, instead of the contrasting behavior from the income-based response, finding the current development process absolutely beneficial increased with decreasing education level, as expected and seen in Figure 8.10.

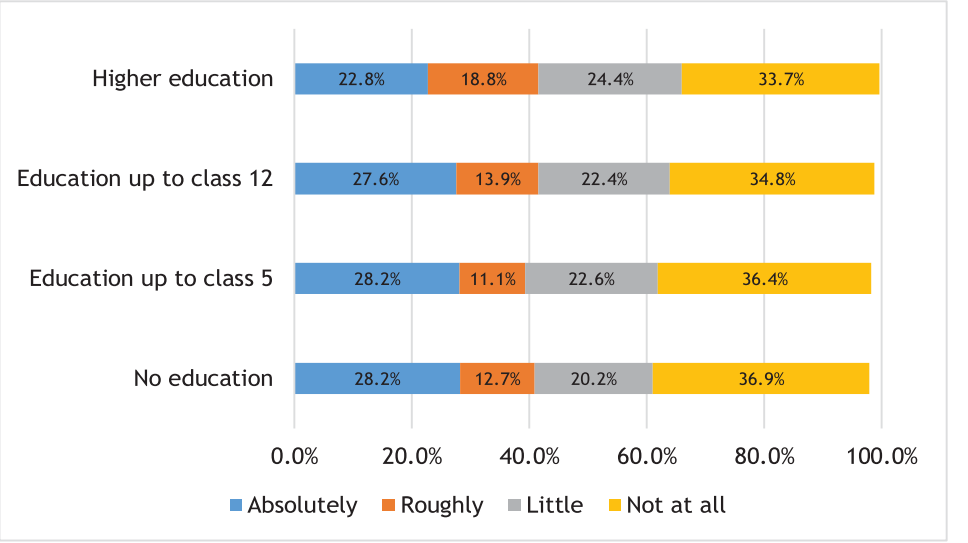



Figure 8.10: Responses based on education qualification

When the respondents were asked if the current development process is equally beneficial for all religious groups, about 45% believed the process to be absolutely equally beneficial for respondents of all religions. About 17% felt that it was roughly equal and according to 16%, there was little equality. Moreover,19% felt that it was not equally beneficial at all (Figure 8.11). Among the respondents categorized by education, gender, residence, the pattern of responses was similar (Annex, Table 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3).

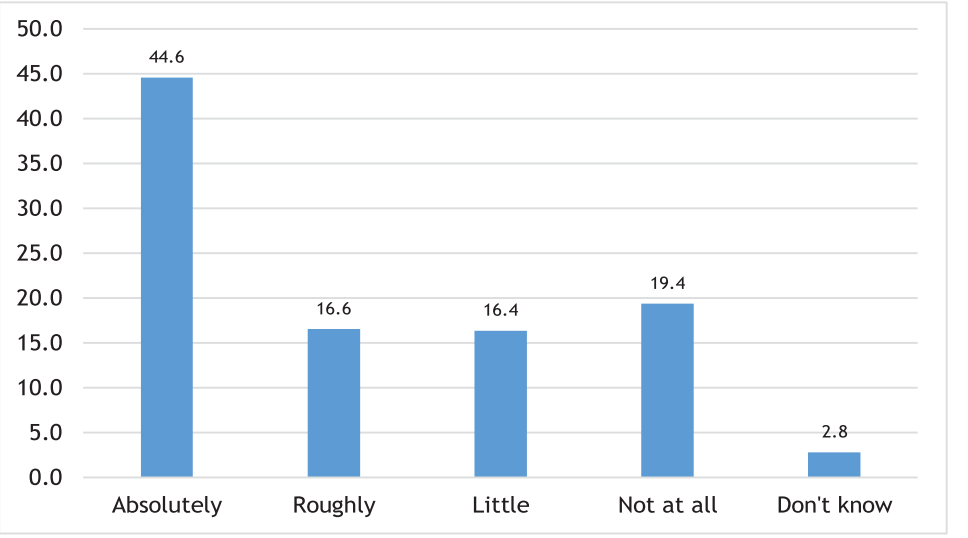



Figure 8.11: Is the current development process equally beneficial for respondents of all religions?

Finally, the survey asked how equally beneficial the development process was for respondents of all ethnic groups. According to 39% of the respondents, it is absolutely equal, 14.7% believed it to be roughly equal, 18% found little equality, and for 20% the process is not equal at all (Figure 8.12). The pattern of the responses did not seem to vary among different gender groups and respondents from urban or rural backgrounds (Annex, Table 8.4 and Table 8.5).

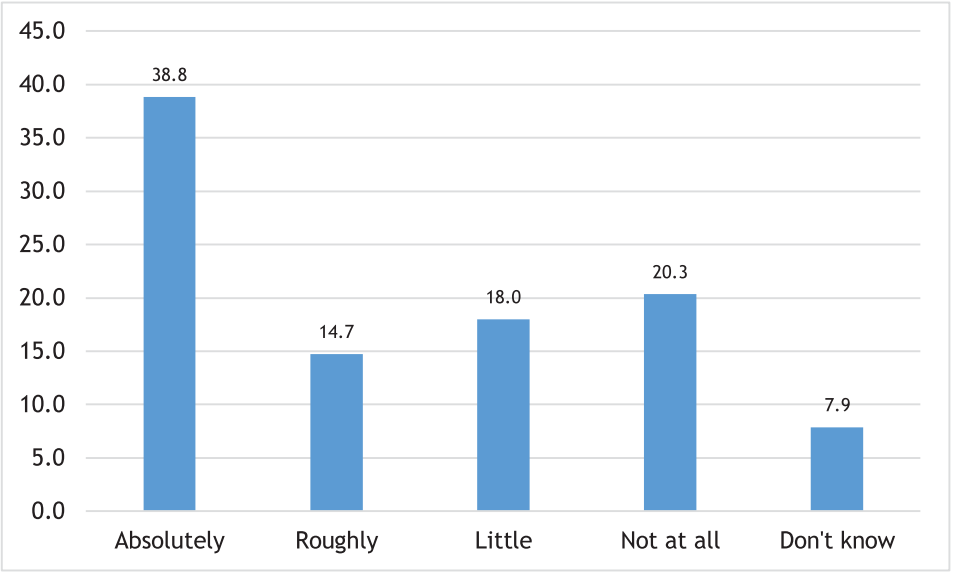



Figure 8.12: Is the current development process equally beneficial for respondents of all ethnic groups?

The level of education did not have much effect on the respondent's answer as to how equally beneficial the current development process is with regard to different ethnic groups (Figure 8.13).

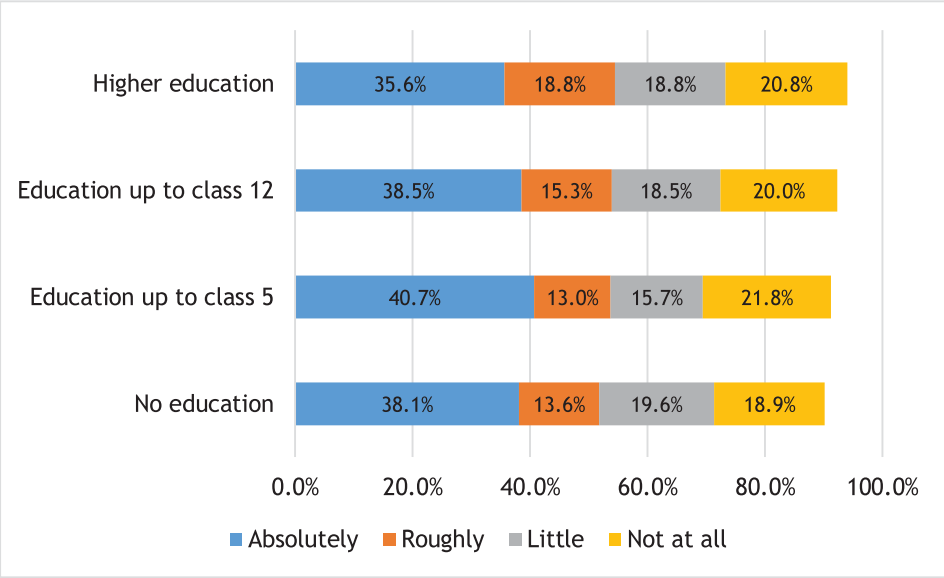



Figure 8.13: Is the current development process equally beneficial for respondents of all ethnic groups? (by education)

# 9. SOCIAL COHESION, TRUST, AND ROHINGYA ISSUES

## 9.1. Trust

On the topics of trust and faith, the respondents were given specific statements and asked to choose the one closest to their view. Respondents did not seem very inclined to easily trust people (Figure 9.1). Almost 76% said that they should be very careful in dealing with people and around 19% said that most people cannot be trusted. Only about 4% said that most people can be trusted. Non-educated respondents seemed to answer more for both "most people cannot be trusted" and "most people can be trusted" categories. On the other hand, respondents with higher education (Figure 9.2) answered more in favor of being careful in dealing with people (84%). In fact, the percentage for this response gets higher with the rise in education levels (Figure 9.2). Responses based on other categories (urban/rural and gender) do not show any significant variances.

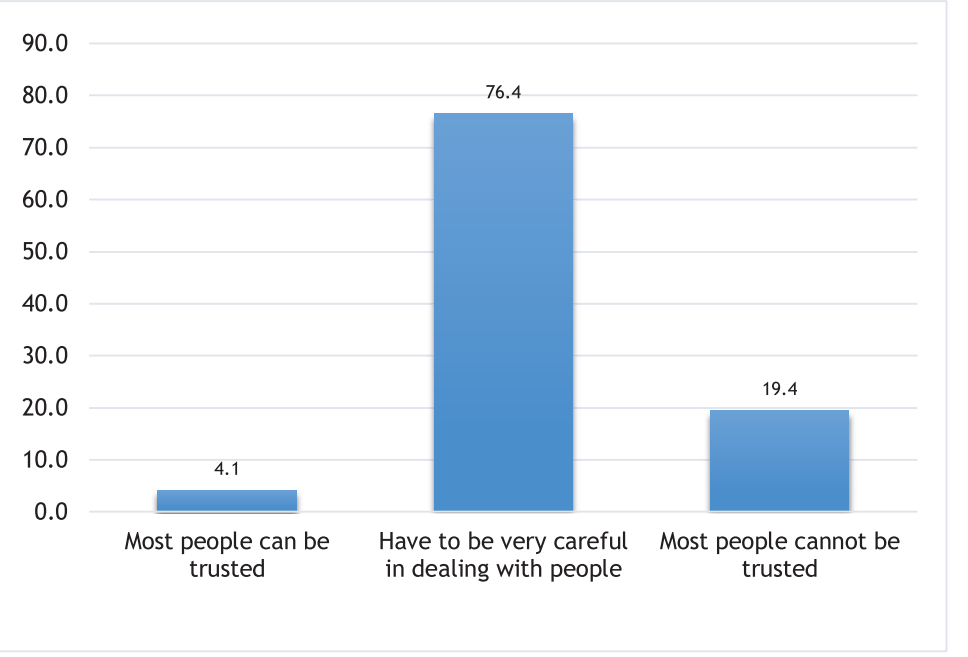



Figure 9.1: Opinions on trust

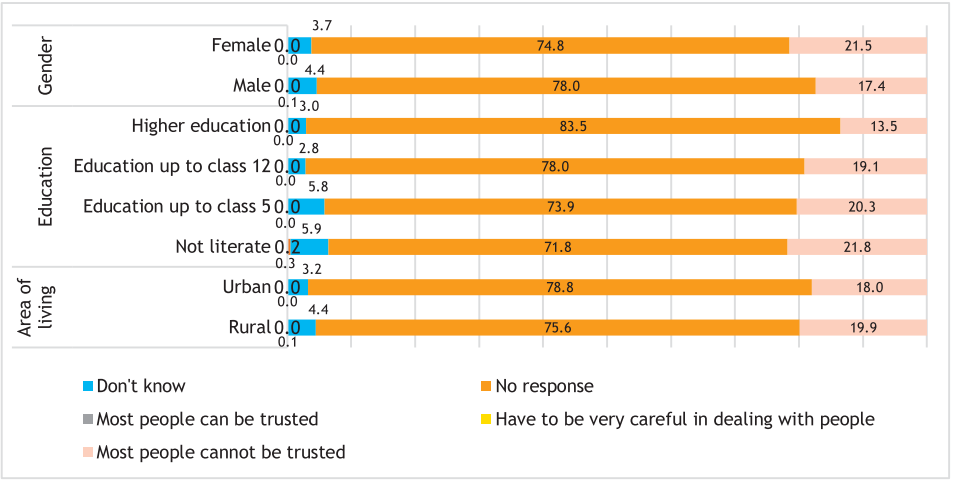



Figure 9.2: Opinions on trust (by educational qualification, area, and gender)

The respondents were then asked to rate their neighbors and it could be seen that about 80% of them found their neighbors trustworthy (Figure 9.3). About 39% found their neighbors very trustworthy and 41% found them trustworthy. About 17% had little trust in their neighbors and 3% had no trust at all. Trust in neighbors is comparatively lower among the respondents in the lowest income tier compared to the rest (about 70% compared to other groups reporting 80% or more). However, the share of very trustworthy neighbors is again higher among this cohort (Figure 9.4). The education level of respondents and the type of areas they were from did not seem to have notable variances (Figure 9.5).

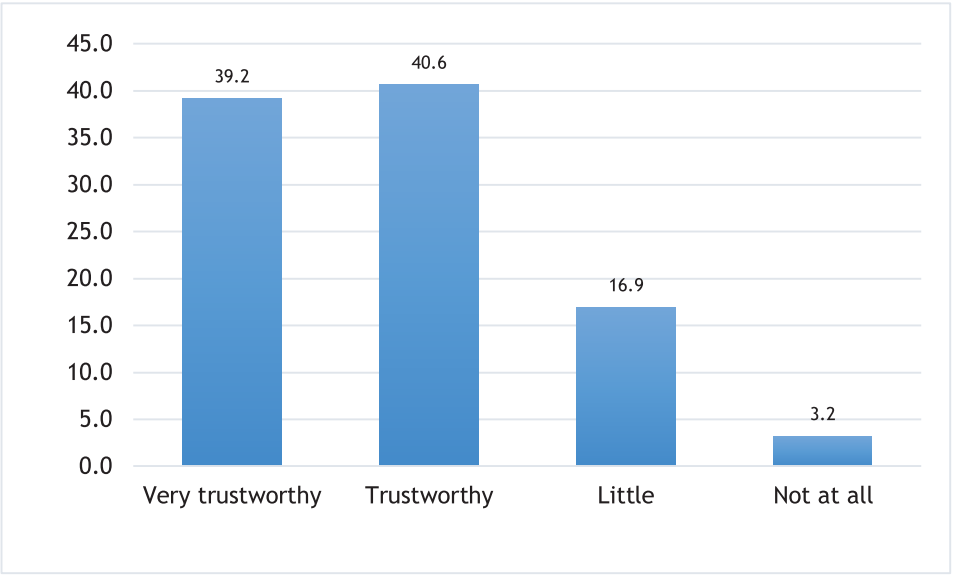



Figure 9.3: How would you rate your trust in your neighbors?

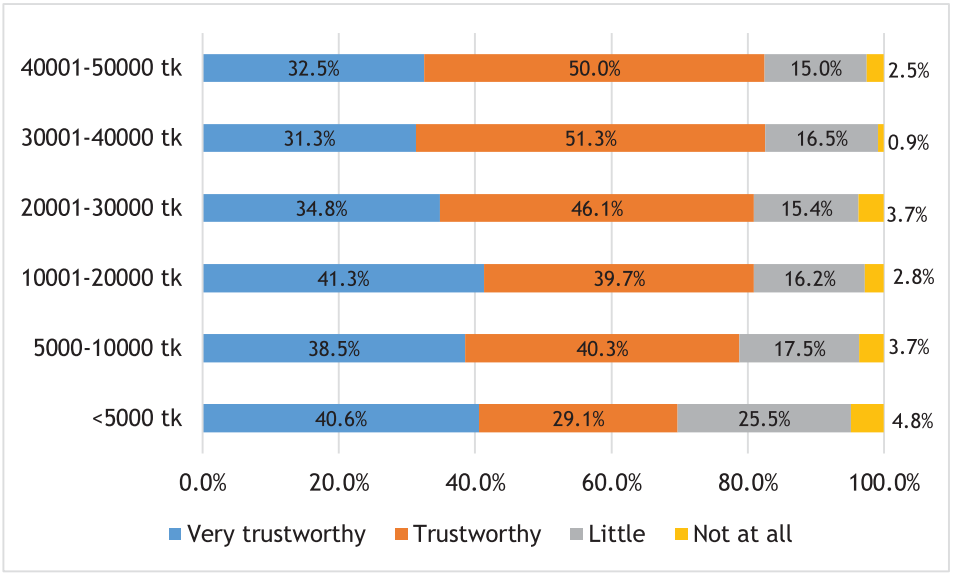



Figure 9.4: How would you rate your trust in your neighbors? (by income)

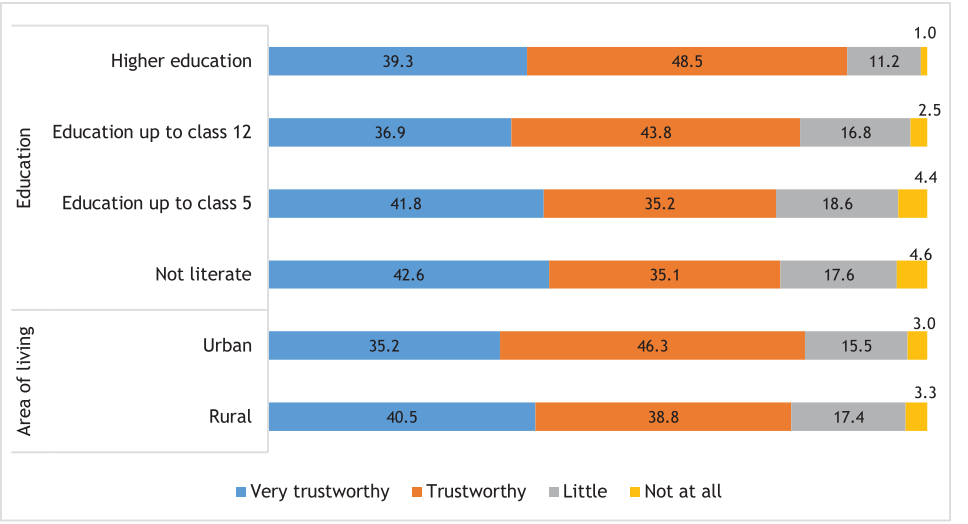



Figure 9.5: How would you rate your trust in your neighbors? (by education and area)

Next, the respondents were asked to rate their trust in their community leaders. The survey found that respondents had less trust in the leaders than they had in their neighbors. About 27% found them very trustworthy, 32% found them trustworthy, 28% had little trust in them, and 14% had no trust at all (Figure 9.6). Respondents belonging to the lowest and highest income groups were seen to find the leaders very trustworthy more than respondents in the middle-earning zone (Figure 9.7). While it could be seen that with lower education level, the tendency of respondents finding their community leaders very trustworthy increased (Figure 9.8), the trust in community leaders are comparatively higher among rural respondents.

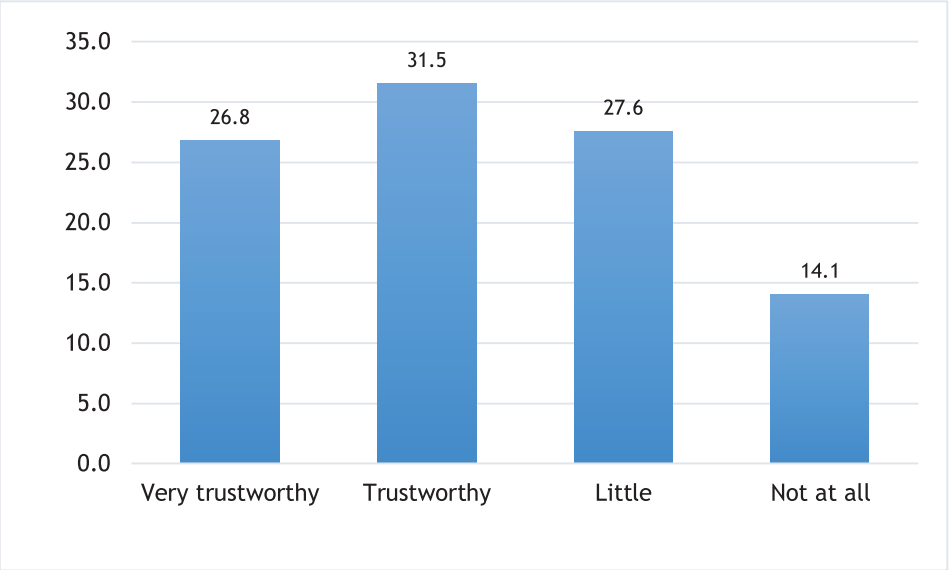



Figure 9.6: How would you rate your trust in community leaders?

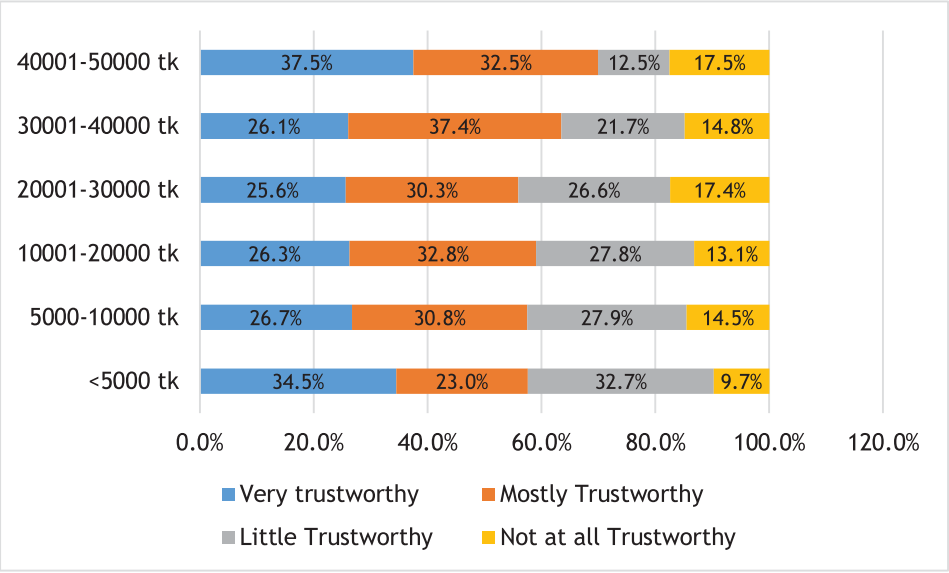



Figure 9.7: How would you rate your trust in community leaders? (by income)

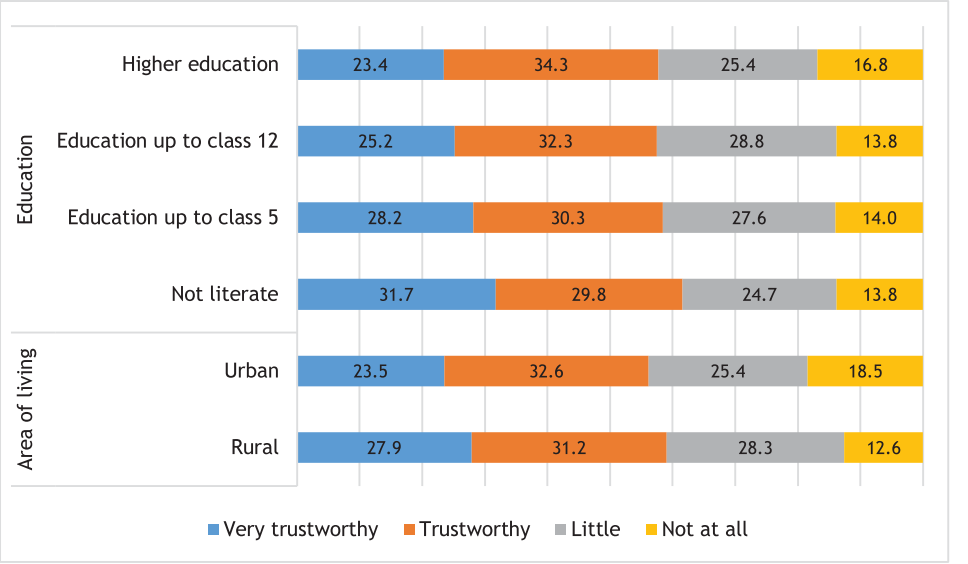



Figure 9.8: How would you rate your trust in community leaders? (by education and location)

When respondents were asked to rate their trust in community groups/organizations, their responses were similar to their trust in community leaders. About 25% found them to be very trustworthy, 32% found them as trustworthy, 27% thought they could be little trusted, and about 17% said they were not trustworthy at all (Figure 9.9). Not many variations across income groups are noted; though, once again, the percentage of finding community groups trustworthy are lowest among the lowest income group (Figure 9.10). The education-wise disaggregation does not show many variations (Figure 9.11) but in general, respondents in rural areas found the community groups more trustworthy than the urban respondents did.

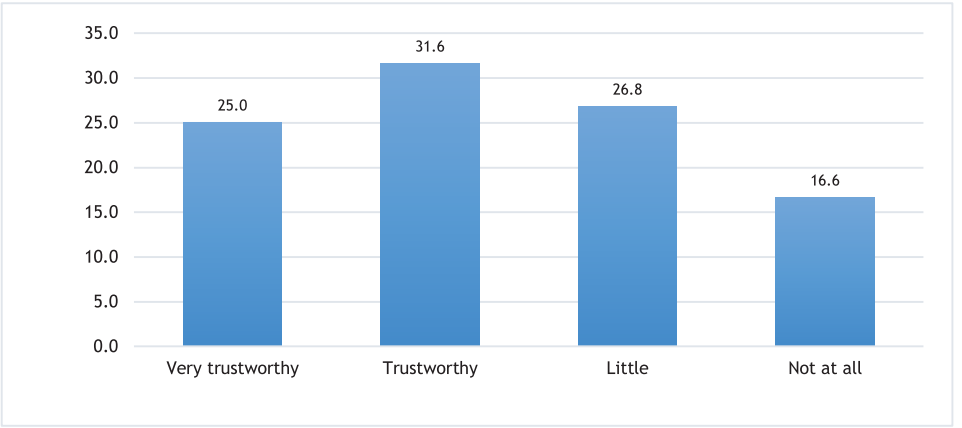



Figure 9.9: How would you rate your trust in community groups/organizations?

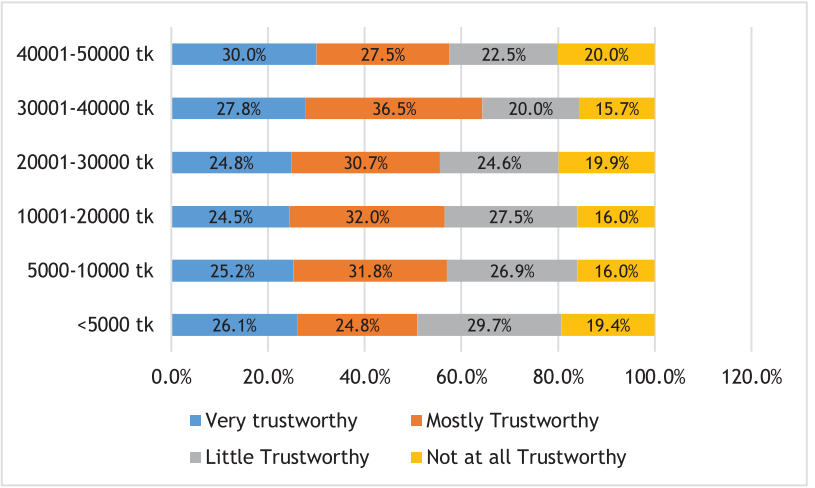



Figure 9.10: How would you rate your trust in community groups/organizations? (by income)

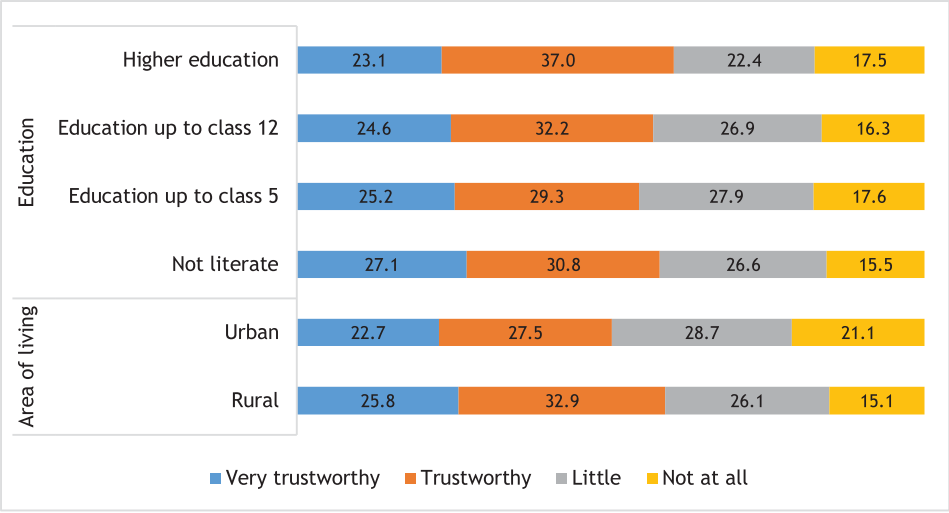



Figure 9.11: How would you rate your trust in community groups/organizations? (by education and location)

## 9.2. Participation in collective action

For this section, the respondents were given a specific scenario to imagine: "A new school is being built in your area and the government has asked you to form a committee with the locals to supervise the work. You are also informed that there will be no form of incentive for supervising this committee." They were then asked their opinions on this.

The difference in opinion was quite obvious. More than 90% of the respondents commended this as a good initiative and 6% thought that such groups could have no impact (Figure 9.12).

Only respondents earning greater than BDT 40,000 seemed to find the initiative less good (83%) compared to the respondents of lower-earning groups (over 92% for each) (Figure 9.13).

Regardless of the difference in educational level and type of area the respondents were from, there was not much difference in opinion regarding this question (Figure 9.14).

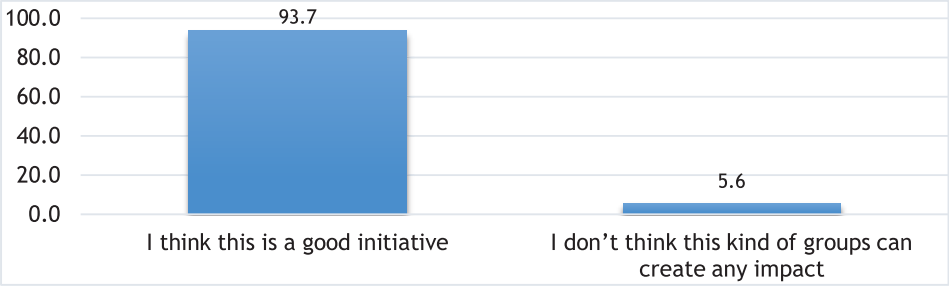



Figure 9.12: Opinions on voluntary monitoring of local construction work

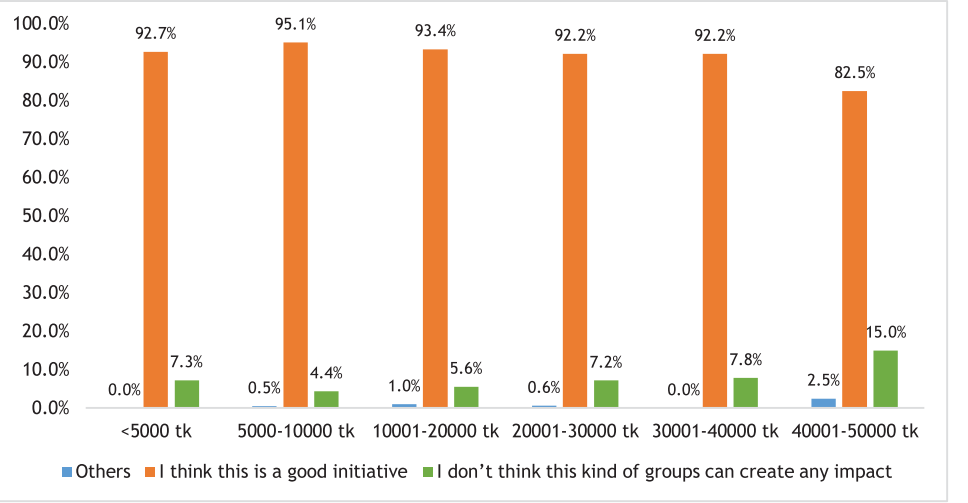



Figure 9.13: View on the initiative of voluntary monitoring of local construction work (by income)

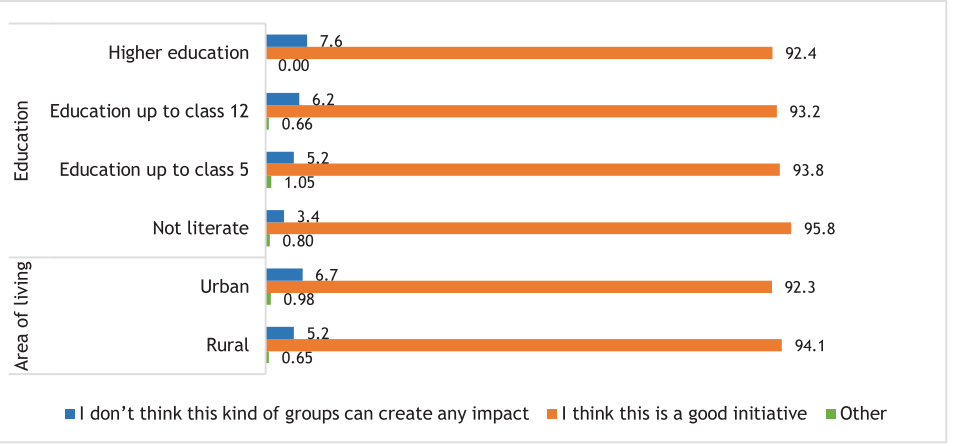



Figure 9.14: View on the initiative of voluntary monitoring of local construction work (by education and the area of living)

After learning about respondents' perspective on the initiative, they were then asked about their view on being requested to be a part of the committee. Around 77% of the respondents said that they would be eager to help and 20% said that it would be difficult to manage time for such activities. Only about 1% refused to be a part of it unless they were being paid (Figure 9.15). Respondents with grade 12 and/or higher education were more eager than others in being part of this initiative (Figure 9.17). Moreover, more males (about 82%) were interested to join than females (73%).

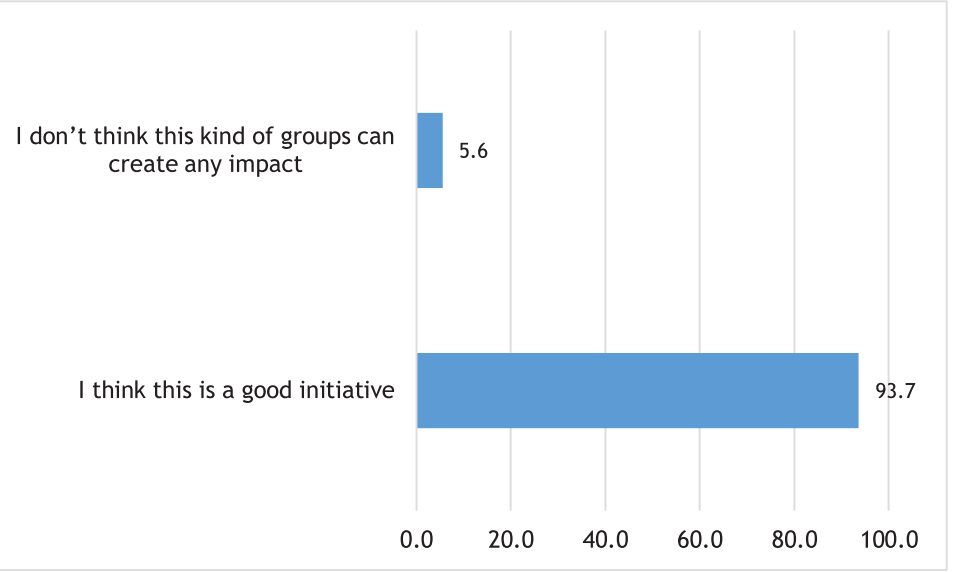



Figure 9.15: What would you do if you were asked to be part of the committee?

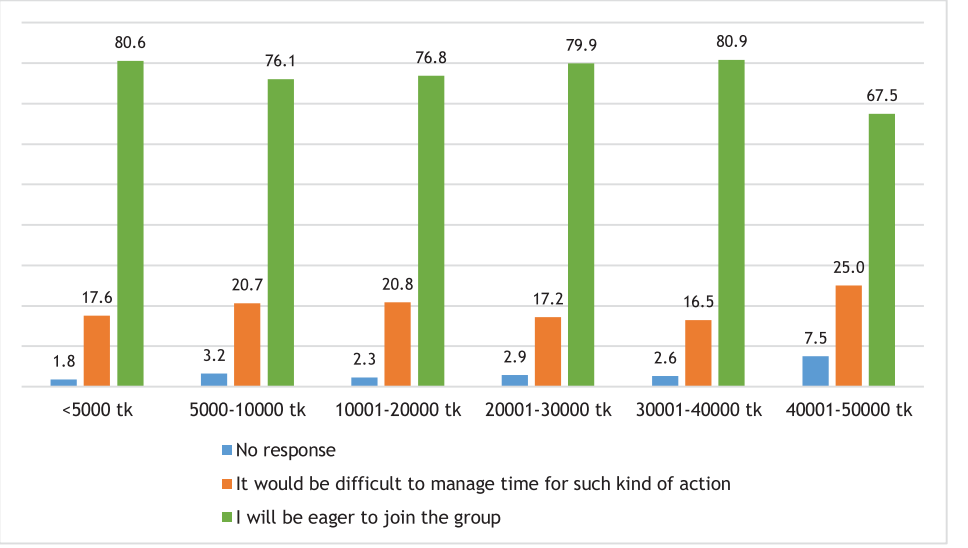



Figure 9.16: Responses based on average monthly income

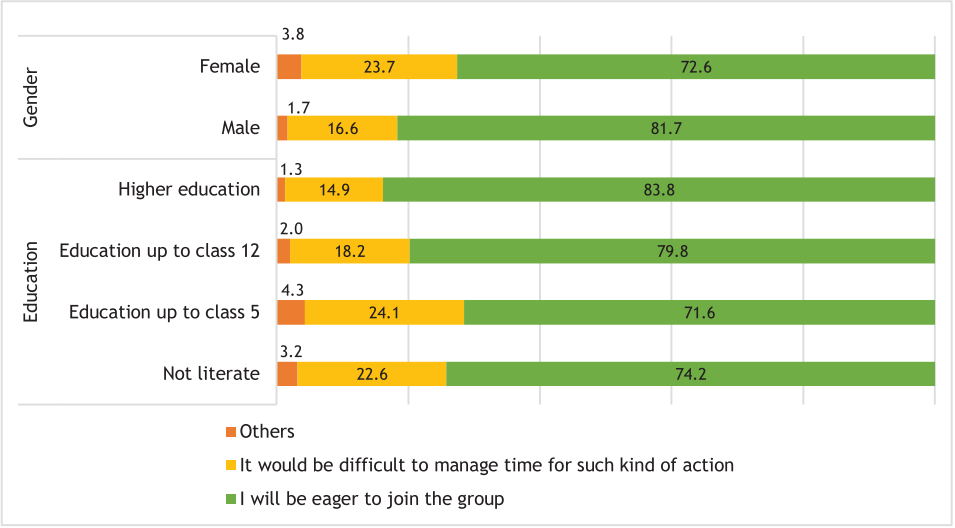



Figure 9.17: Responses based on educational qualification

## 9.3. Attitude towards Rohingya refugees

Respondents were asked how they felt about Rohingya refugees living in their community. The negative interest was very visible with about 86% of the respondents saying that they will not welcome Rohingya refugees to live in their community. Meanwhile, about 15% of the respondents said that they would welcome them. When compared to the responses received from the 2018 survey, it could be seen that percentage of affirmation decreased from 34% to 15%, and the percentage of refusal increased from 65% to 86% (Figure 9.18). The respondents with the lowest income were more welcoming of the refugees than the respondents from other income groups (Figure 9.19). Also, positive responses increase with increases in education levels.

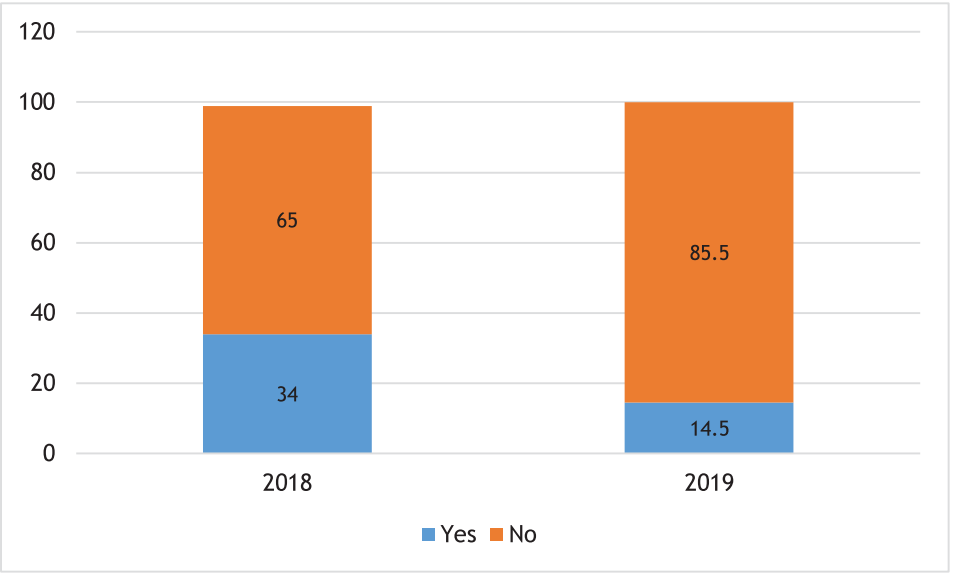



Figure 9.18: Will you welcome Rohingya refugees to live in your community?

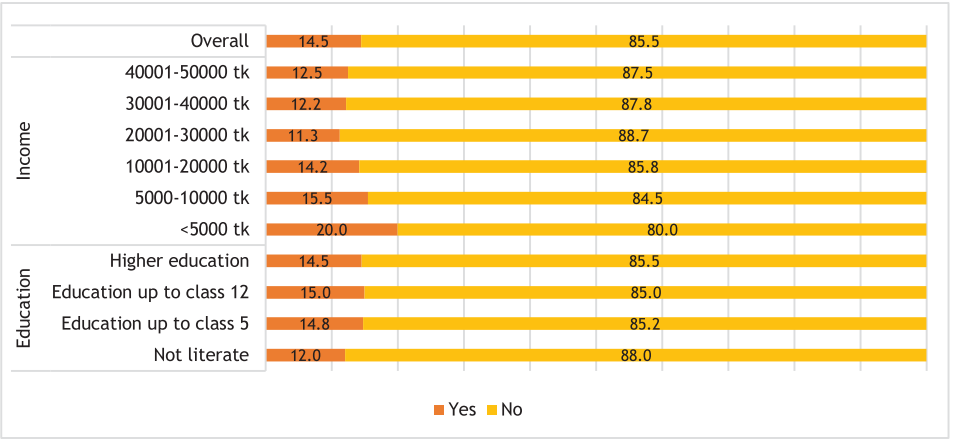



Figure 9.19: Will you welcome Rohingya refugees to live in your community? (by income)

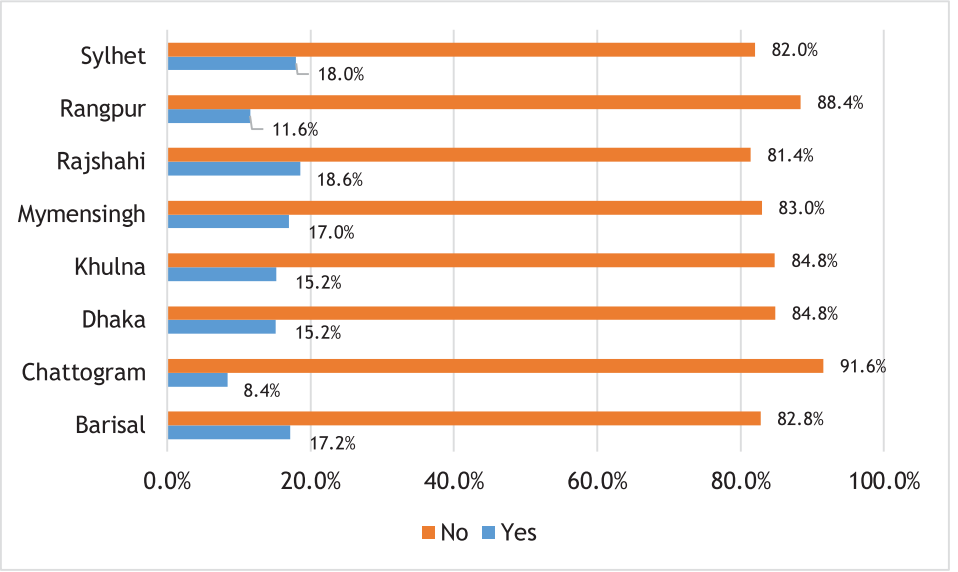



Figure 9.20: Will you welcome Rohingya refugees to live in your community? (by region)

The disaggregation by region shows that percentage of negative responses towards welcoming Rohingyas in their community was higher in Chattogram compared to all other regions (around 92% responded negatively to that question) (Figure 9.20). About 88% of the citizens living in Rangpur also responded negatively. Not much variation in responses is noted in other divisions.

Next, respondents were asked if they thought that the Bangladesh government is doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees. Almost 60% of the respondents thought that the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) is doing enough, followed by 34% thinking that the government is doing a lot. Only 3% felt that the government is not doing enough and 4% said that they did not know (Figure 9.21). Even though the aggregated responses (doing a lot and doing enough) regarding the Bangladesh government's performance on Rohingya issues do not vary much by income, it seems that in contrast to the respondents with lower income, respondents with higher income seemed to think that the government is doing a lot. For instance, 45% of the respondents in the highest income cohort said that Bangladesh government is doing a lot but only 29% of the respondents in the lowest income cohort felt this way (Figure 9.22). Education, however, did not seem to have any effect on the respondents' opinions in this regard (Figure 9. 23).

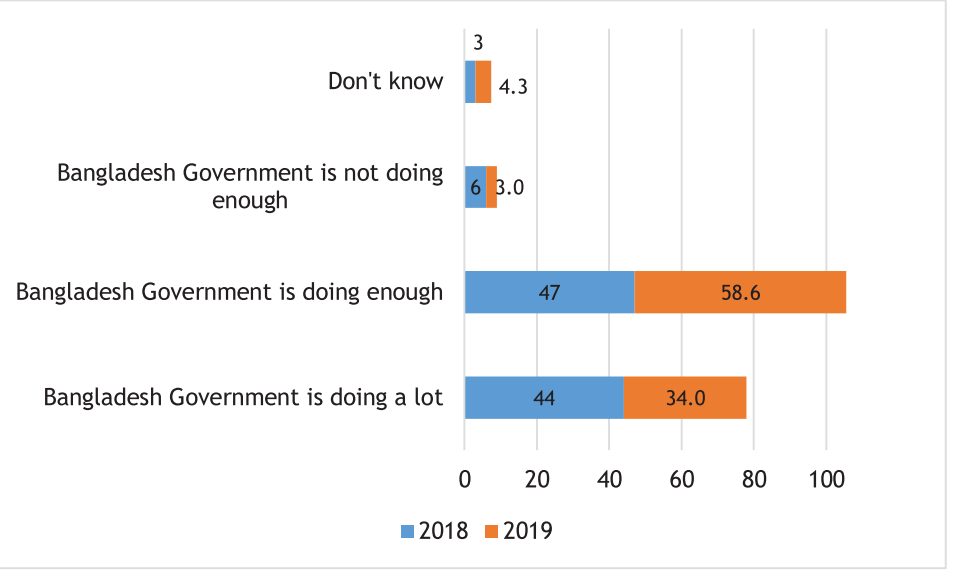



Figure 9.21: Do you think that the Bangladesh government is doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees?

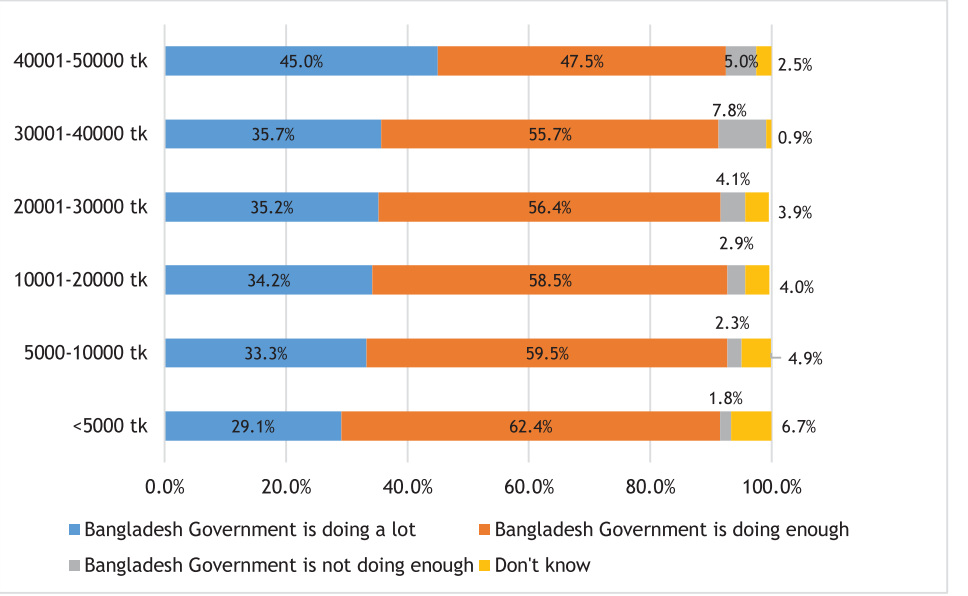



Figure 9.22: Is Bangladesh government is doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees? (by income)

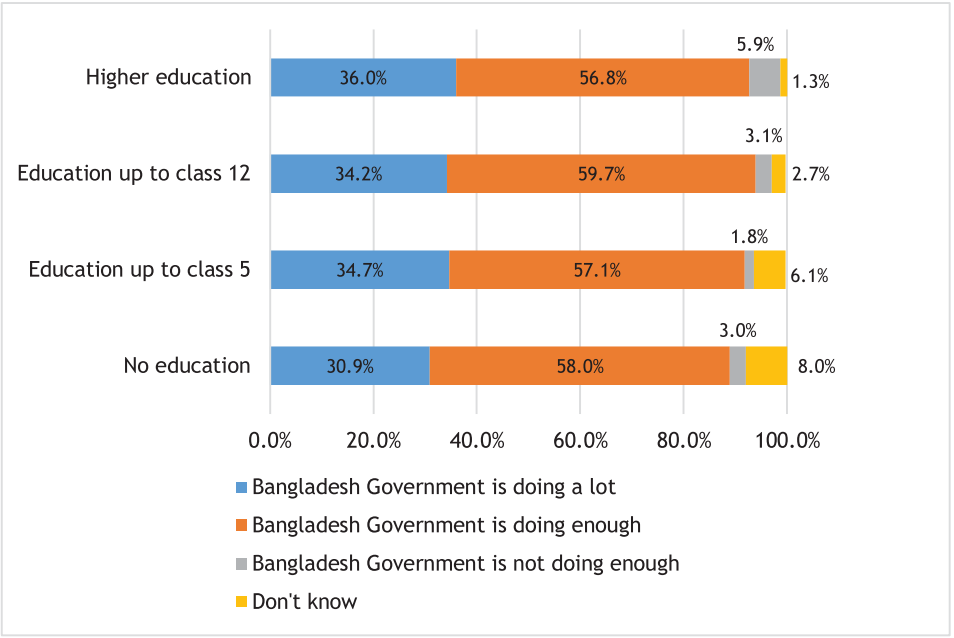



Figure 9.23: Is Bangladesh government is doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees? (by education)

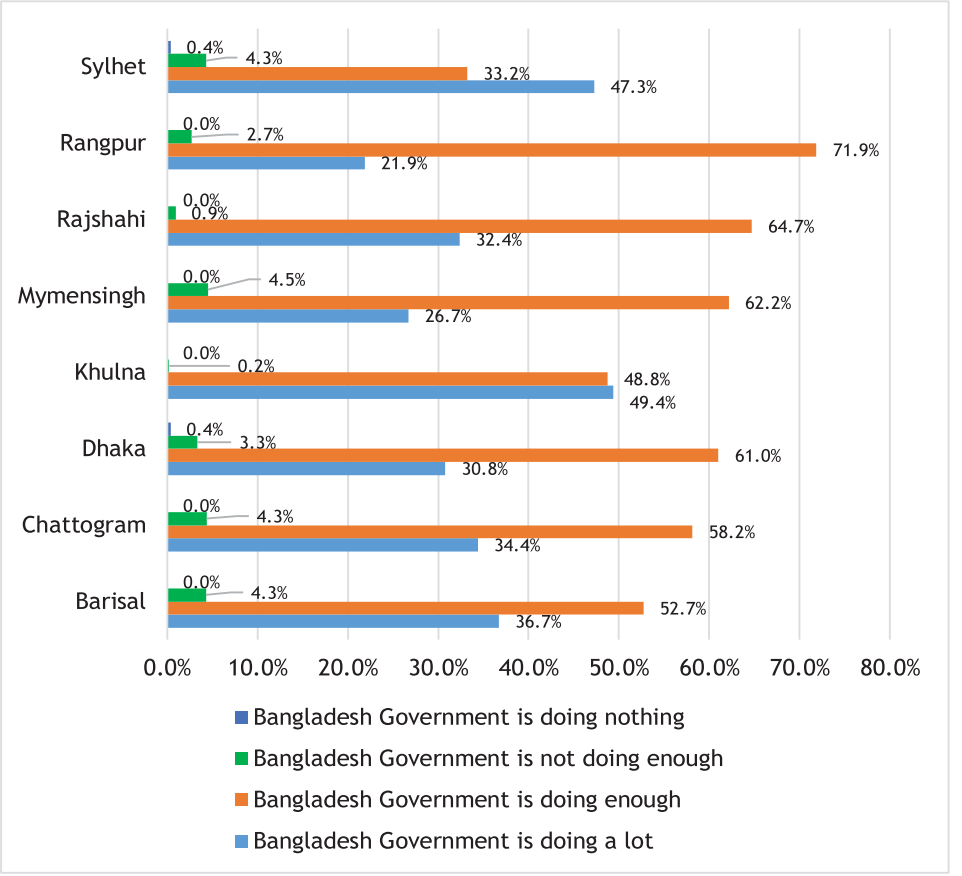



Figure 9.24: Is Bangladesh government is doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees? (by region)

When disaggregated by division, it is seen that that people in all the divisions tend to think that the government is doing either a lot or enough. Citizens in Khulna and Sylhet tended to respond more strongly compared to the responendents in other divisions (Figure 9.24).

Respondents were also asked if the international community is doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees. About 56% answered that the international community is doing enough and 17% answered that it is doing a lot. More respondents believed that compared to the Bangladesh government (3%), the international community is not doing enough (10%). A good number of respondents (16%) also felt that they did not know about the role or work of the international community (Figure 9.25). Among the ones who chose "do not know," 25% had no education and just about 6% had higher education. Again, a larger percentage of respondents with higher education felt that the international community is not doing enough than respondents with a lower level of education who thought the same (Figure 9.26). It could be observed that with increasing income, more respondents believed the international community to be doing a lot (Figure 9.27).

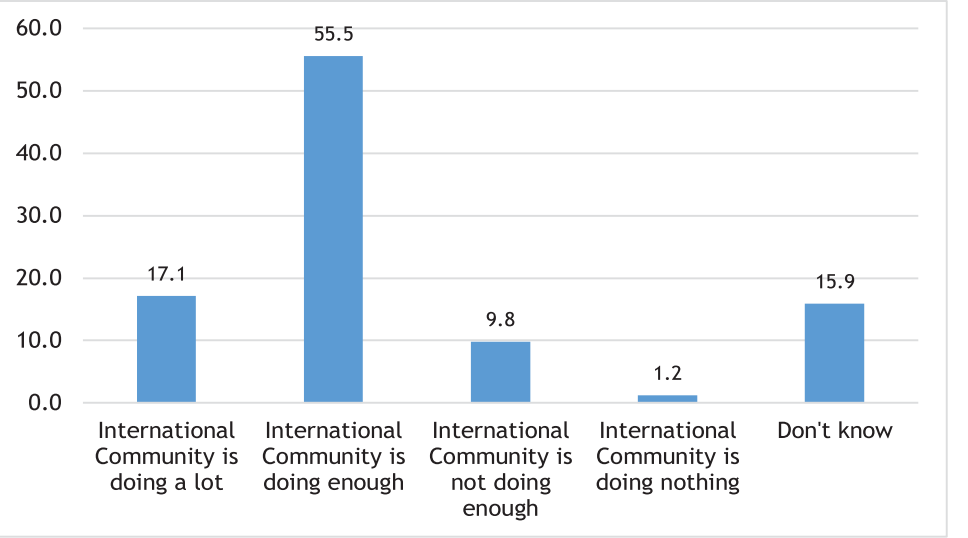



Figure 9.25: Do you think that the international community is doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees?

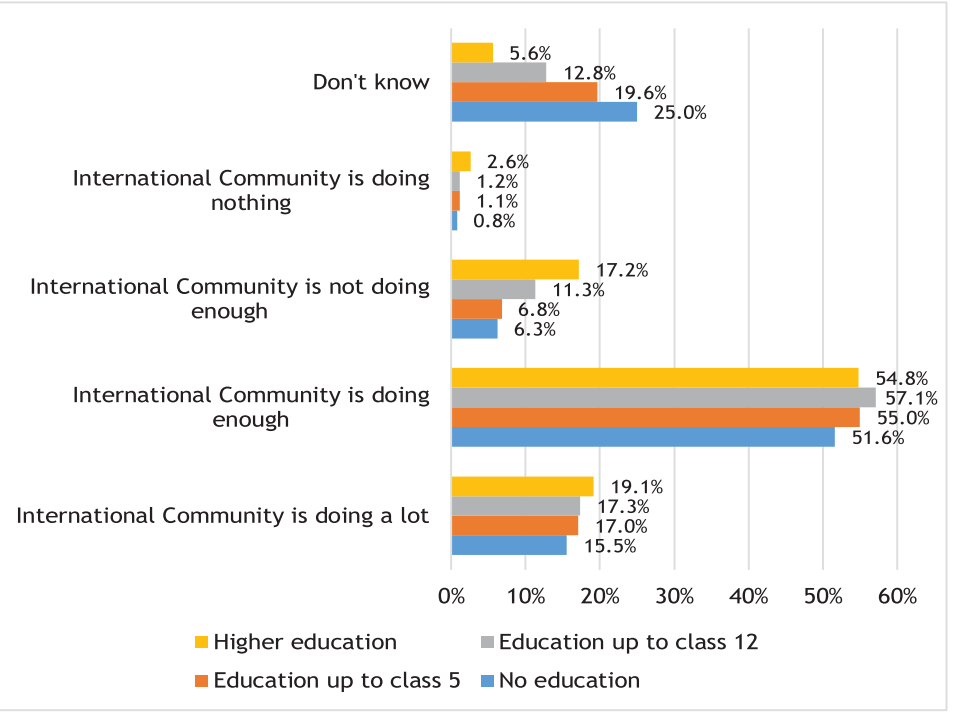



Figure 9.26: Is the international community doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees? (by education)

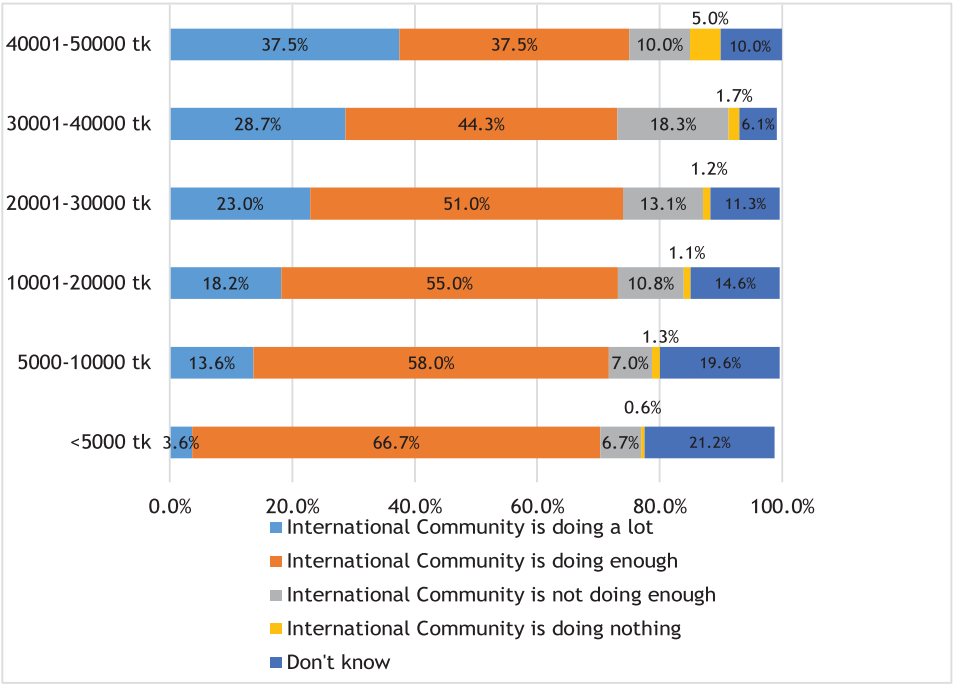



Figure 9.27: Is the international community doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees? (by income)

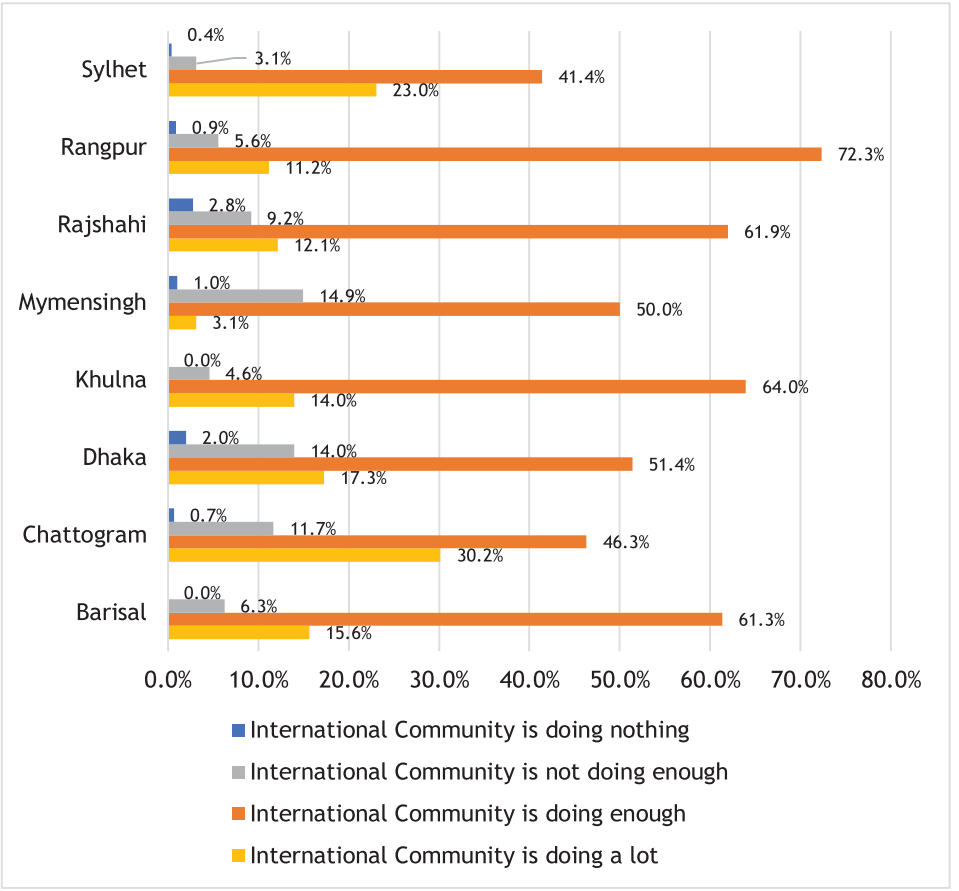



Figure 9.28: Is the international community is doing enough to support the Rohingya refugees? (by region)

The region-wise disaggregation regarding the international community's responses on Rohingya issues show that in all divisions these tend to be positive. However, citizens in Chattogram agreed more strongly compared to other divisions (30% viewed that international community is doing a lot (Figure 9.28).

The survey wanted to find out from the respondents how long Rohingya refugees should be allowed to stay in Bangladesh. Almost 70% of the respondents believed that they should leave immediately, while about 20% felt that they should leave when it is safe to return to their country. Moreover, about 4% suggested that they should stay in Bangladesh until they can go to another country, 2% said they could stay indefinitely, and 5% did not know. Again, as it is seen in the previous question, respondents have grown less welcoming towards Rohingya refugees since 2018; a similar observation could be seen here as respondents answering that the refugees should leave now increased from 40% to 69% and answering until it is safe to return decreased from 45% to 20% (Figure 9.29).

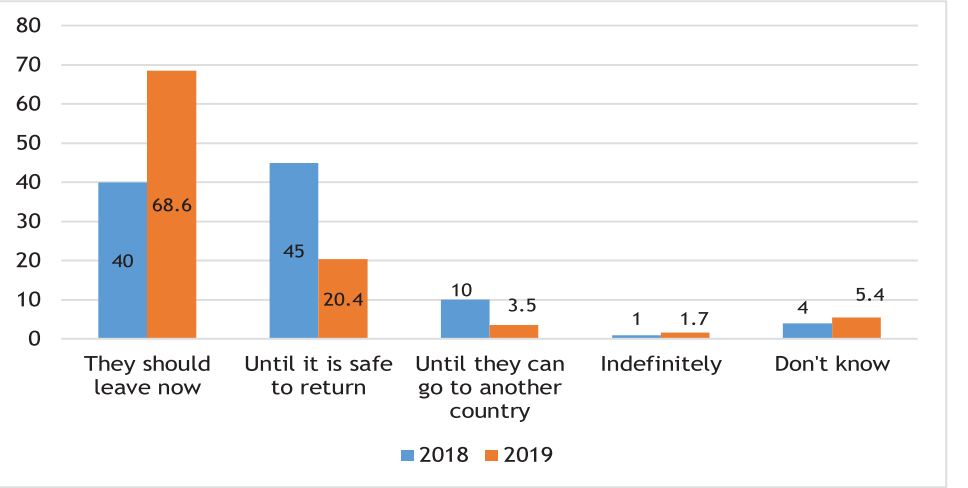



Figure 9.29: How long can Rohingya refugees be allowed to stay in Bangladesh?

On the other hand, respondents with higher income answered more in favor of them leaving now than people of lower income (Figure 9.30). There was no significant variance in the responses based on education level (Figure 9.31). The region disaggregated responses also dosn't report much variation even though it is evident that people living in Rangpur and Khulna are strongly arguing for Rohingya community's immediate returns followed by the others (Figure 9.32).

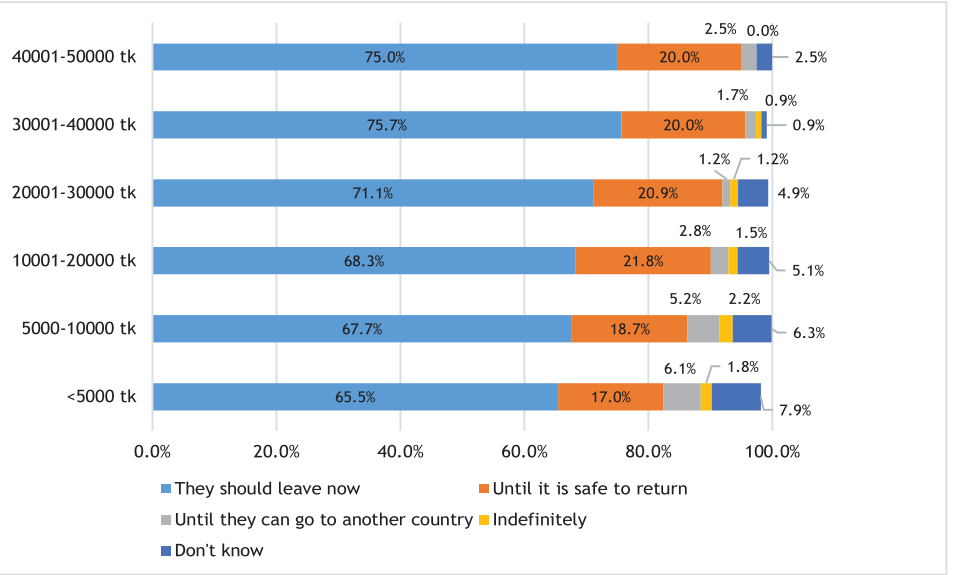



Figure 9.30: How long can Rohingya refugees be allowed to stay in Bangladesh? (by income)

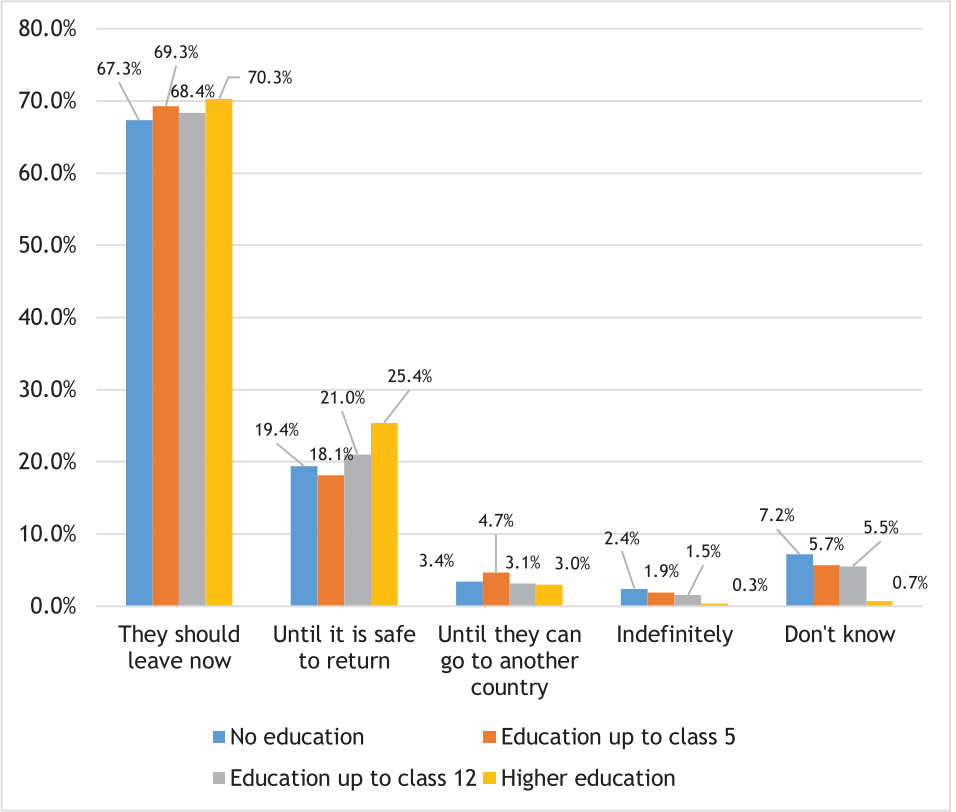



Figure 9.31: How long can Rohingya refugees be allowed to stay in Bangladesh? (by education)

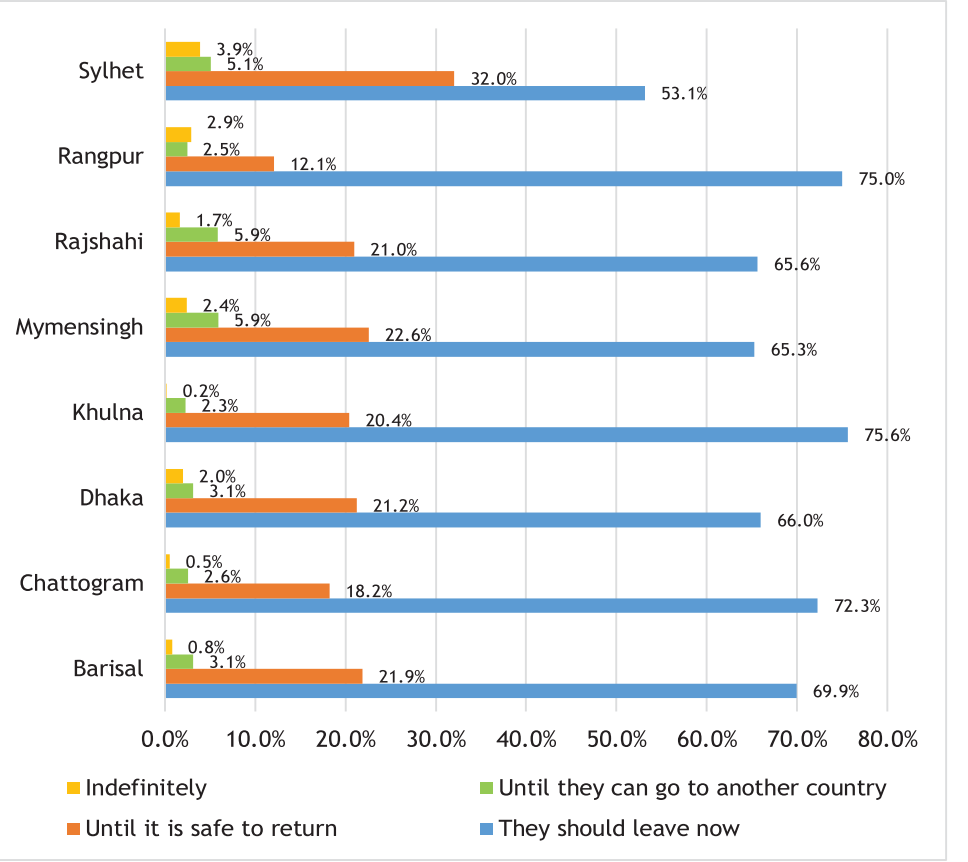



Figure 9.32: How long can Rohingya refugees be allowed to stay in Bangladesh? (by region)

The last question on Rohingya refugees sought to understand the perceptions regarding the immediate effects (on the country in general) of Rohingya's coming to Bangladesh. Almost 90% thought the effects were negative with only 7% finding positive effects. About 3% said that there was no effect and another 3% did not know (Figure 9.33). Respondents living in urban areas seemed to report positive effects more than respondents living in rural areas (Figure 9.34). On the other hand, neither income nor educational level could make a difference in the respondents' answers in this regard (Figure 9.35 and Figure 9.36). Region-wise disaggregation doesn't show much variation but citizens living in Barisal showed some positivity compared to other divisions. Alternatively, citizens living in Khulna reported highest negative, i.e. 96% or so (Figure 9.37). If the responses are assessed against their relative poverty level, it appears that the poorer regions are slightly more likely to report the negative impacts of Rohingya in Bangladesh compared to the other districts, such as Dhaka and Sylhet. Even though Barisal is an exception, only 62 % of the respondents reported the negative where it is higher than 80% in all other regions (Figure 9.38) .

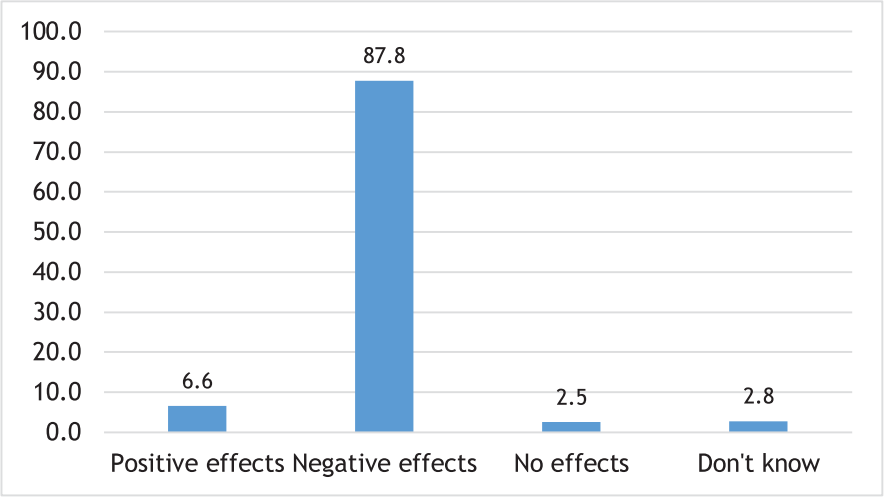



Figure 9.33: What has been the immediate effect of Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh?

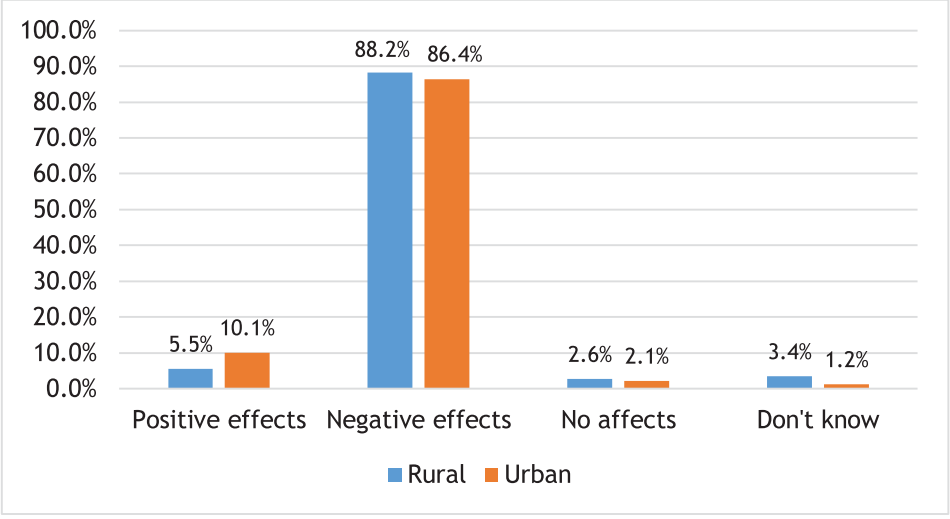



Figure 9.34: Immediate effect of Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh (by location)

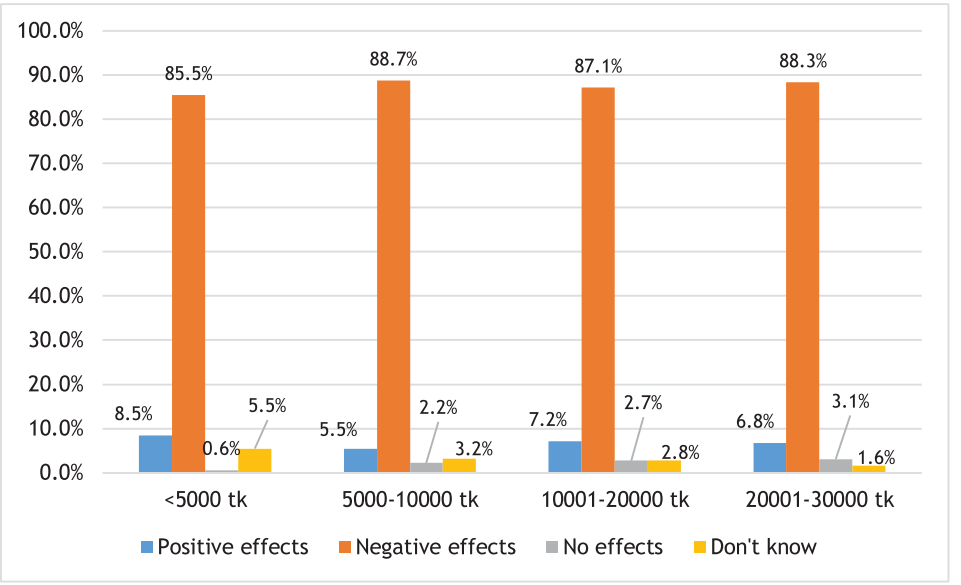



Figure 9.35: Immediate effect of Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh (by income)

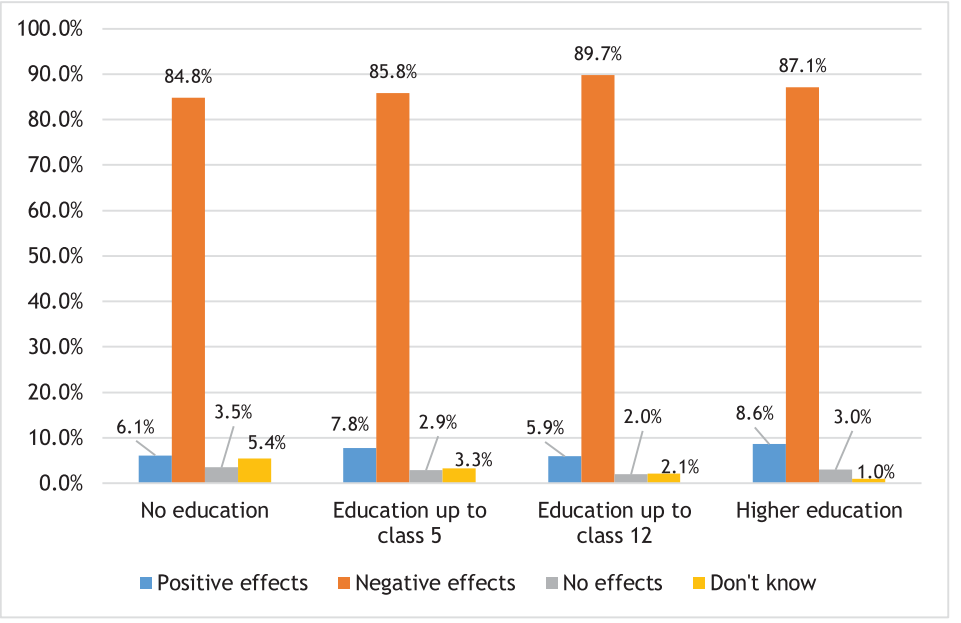



Figure 9.36: Immediate effect of Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh (by education)

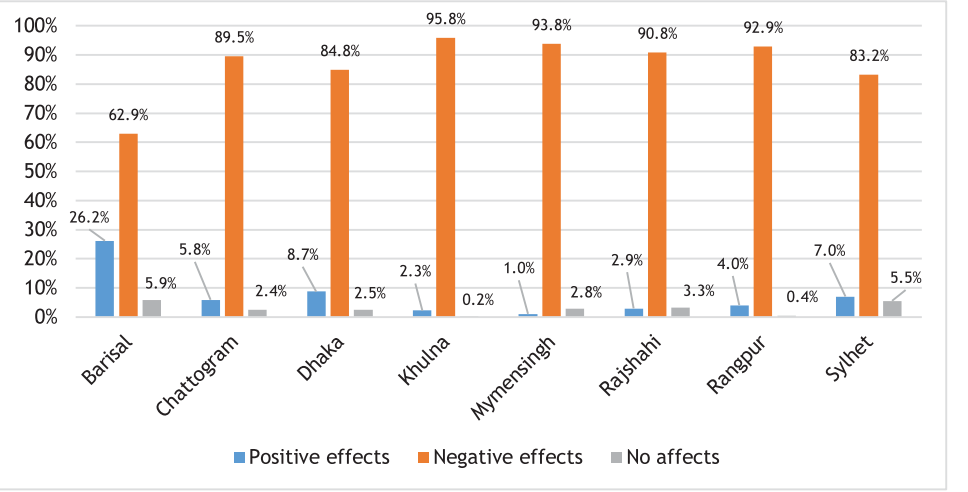



Figure 9.37: Immediate effect of Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh (by region)

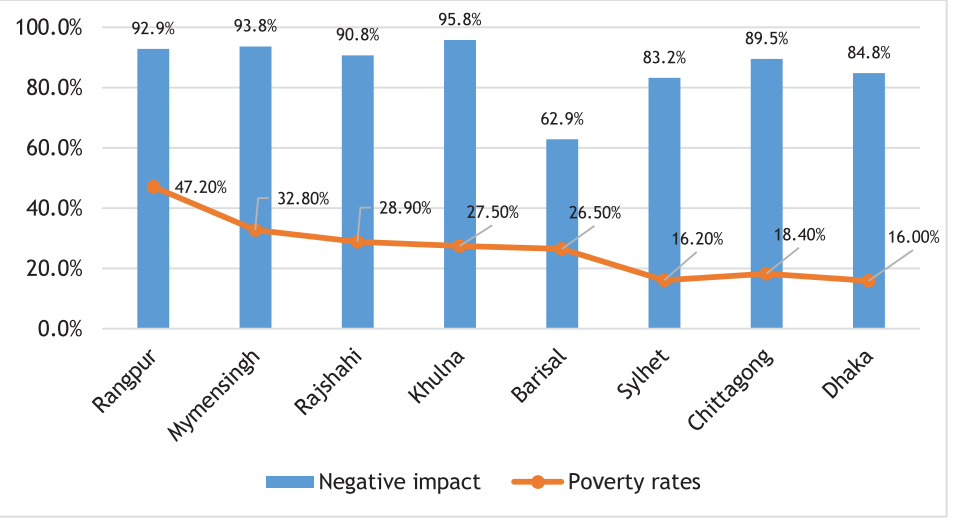



Figure 9.38: Immediate effect of Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh (by region and poverty)

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The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region addresses five overarching goals—strengthen governance, empower women, expand economic opportunity, increase environmental resilience, and promote international cooperation.

Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals. In 2019, we provided $84.9 million in direct program support and distributed textbooks and other educational materials valued at $7.3 million.

Since 1954, The Asia Foundation has supported Bangladesh's progress toward and achievement of its development priorities and goals through long-standing partnerships with the government, civil society, religious communities and leaders, the private sector, and the Bangladeshi people. With a focus on gender equality, civic accountability, and social cohesion across all facets of our work, the Bangladesh Country Office encourages innovation and creativity in tackling community challenges, building leadership capacity that reflects the country's diversity, and facilitating broad-based participation in the country's development to help ensure that no one is left behind.

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